

---

*The Life, Crime and Capture of  
John Wilkes Booth*

---



by George Alfred Townsend

Styled by [LimpidSoft](#)

# Contents

<b>EXPLANATORY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>LETTER I</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LETTER II</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>LETTER III</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>LETTER IV</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>LETTER V</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>LETTER VI</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>LETTER VII</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>LETTER VIII</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>LETTER IX</b>	<b>85</b>

The present document was derived from text provided by Project Gutenberg (document 6628) which was made available free of charge. This document is also free of charge.

THE LIFE, CRIME, AND CAPTURE  
OF  
JOHN WILKES BOOTH,

WITH A FULL SKETCH OF THE CONSPIRACY OF WHICH HE WAS  
LEADER  
AND THE PURSUIT, TRIAL AND EXECUTION  
OF HIS ACCOMPLICES.

# EXPLANATORY

**ONE YEAR AGO** the writer of the letters which follow, visited the Battle Field of Waterloo. In looking over many relics of the combat preserved in the Museum there, he was particularly interested in the files of journals contemporary with the action. These contained the Duke of Wellington's first despatch announcing the victory, the reports of the subordinate commanders, and the current gossip as to the episodes and hazards of the day.

The time will come when remarkable incidents of these our times will be a staple of as great curiosity as the issue of Waterloo. It is an incident without a precedent on this side of the globe, and never to be repeated.

Assassination has made its last effort to become indigenous here. The public sentiment of Loyalist and Rebel has denounced it: the world has remarked it with uplifted hands and words of execration. Therefore, as long as history shall hold good, the murder of the President will be a theme for poesy, romance and tragedy. We who live in this consecrated time keep the sacred souvenirs of Mr. Lincoln's death in our possession; and the best of these are the news letters descriptive of his apotheosis, and the fate of the conspirators who slew him.

I represented the *World* newspaper at Washington during the whole of those exciting weeks, and wrote their occurrences fresh from the mouths of the actors.

*Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1865, By Dick & Fitzgerald, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.*

*It has seemed fitting to Messrs. Dick & Fitzgerald to reproduce the World letters, as a keepsake for the many who received them kindly. The Sketches appended were conscientiously written, and whatever embellishments they may seem to have grew out of the stirring events,—not out of my fancy.*

*Subsequent investigation has confirmed the veracity even of their speculations. I have arranged them, but have not altered them; if they represent nothing else, they do carry with them the fever and spirit of the time. But they do not assume to be literal history: We live too close to the events related to decide positively upon them. As a brochure of the day,—nothing more,—I give these Sketches of a Correspondent to the public.*

# LETTER I

## THE MURDER

*Washington, April 17.*

Some very deliberate and extraordinary movements were made by a handsome and extremely well-dressed young man in the city of Washington last Friday. At about half-past eleven o'clock A. M., this person, whose name is J. Wilkes Booth, by profession an actor, and recently engaged in oil speculations, sauntered into Ford's Theater, on Tenth, between E and F streets, and exchanged greetings with the man at the box-office. In the conversation which ensued, the ticket agent informed Booth that a box was taken for Mr. Lincoln and General Grant, who were expected to visit the theater, and contribute to the benefit of Miss Laura Keene, and satisfy the curiosity of a large audience. Mr. Booth went away with a jest, and a lightly-spoken "Good afternoon." Strolling down to Pumphreys' stable, on C street, in the rear of the National Hotel, he engaged a saddle horse, a high-strung, fast, beautiful bay mare, telling Mr. Pumphreys that he should call for her in the middle of the afternoon.

From here he went to the Kirkwood Hotel, on the corner of Pennsylvania avenue and Twelfth street, where, calling for a card and a sheet of notepaper, he sat down and wrote upon the first as follows:

*For Mr. Andrew Johnson:—*

*I don't wish to disturb you; are you at home?*

*J. W. Booth.*

To this message, which was sent up by the obliging clerk, Mr. Johnson responded that he was very busily engaged. Mr. Booth smiled, and turning to his sheet of note-paper, wrote on it. The fact, if fact it is, that he had been disappointed in not obtaining an examination of the Vice-President's apartment

and a knowledge of the Vice-President's probable whereabouts the ensuing evening, in no way affected his composure. The note, the contents of which are unknown, was signed and sealed within a few moments. Booth arose, bowed to an acquaintance, and passed into the street. His elegant person was seen on the avenue a few minutes, and was withdrawn into the Metropolitan Hotel.

At 4 P. M., he again appeared at Pumphreys' livery stable, mounted the mare he had engaged, rode leisurely up F street, turned into an alley between Ninth And Tenth streets, and thence into an alley reloading to the rear of Ford's Theater, which fronts on Tenth street, between E and F streets. Here he alighted and deposited the mare in a small stable off the alley, which he had hired sometime before for the accommodation of a saddle-horse which he had recently sold. Mr. Booth soon afterward retired from the stable, and is supposed to have refreshed himself at a neighboring bar-room.

At 8 o'clock the same evening, President Lincoln and Speaker Colfax sat together in a private room at the White House, pleasantly conversing. General Grant, with whom the President had engaged to attend Ford's Theater that evening, had left with his wife for Burlington, New-Jersey, in the 6 o'clock train. After this departure Mr. Lincoln rather reluctantly determined to keep his part of the engagement, rather than to disappoint his friends and the audience. Mrs. Lincoln, entering the room and turning to Mr. Colfax, said, in a half laughing, half serious way, "Well, Mr. Lincoln, are you going to the theater with me or not?" "I suppose I shall have to go, Colfax," said the President, and the Speaker took his leave in company with Major Rathbone, of the Provost-Marshal General's office, who escorted Miss Harris, daughter of Senator Harris, of New York. Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln reached Ford's Theater at twenty minutes before 9 o'clock.

The house was filled in every part with a large and brilliantly attired audience. As the presidential party ascended the stairs, and passed behind the dress circle to the entrance of the private box reserved for them, the whole assemblage, having in mind the recent Union victories, arose, cheered, waving hats and handkerchiefs, and manifesting every other accustomed sign of enthusiasm. The President, last to enter the box, turned before doing so, and bowed a courteous acknowledgment of his reception—At the moment of the President's arrival, Mr. Hawks, one of the actors, performing the well-known part of Dundreary, had exclaimed: "This reminds me of a story, as Mr. Lincoln says." The audience forced him, after the interruption, to tell the story over again. It evidently pleased Mr. Lincoln, who turned laughingly to his wife and made a remark which was not overheard.

The box in which the President sat consisted of two boxes turned into one, the middle partition being removed, as on all occasions when a state party

visited the theater. The box was on a level with the dress circle; about twelve feet above the stage. There were two entrances—the door nearest to the wall having been closed and locked; the door nearest the balustrades of the dress circle, and at right angles with it, being open and left open, after the visitors had entered. The interior was carpeted, lined with crimson paper, and furnished with a sofa covered with crimson velvet, three arm chairs similarly covered, and six cane-bottomed chairs. Festoons of flags hung before the front of the box against a background of lace.

President Lincoln took one of the arm-chairs and seated himself in the front of the box, in the angle nearest the audience, where, partially screened from observation, he had the best view of what was transpiring on the stage. Mrs. Lincoln sat next to him, and Miss Harris in the opposite angle nearest the stage. Major Rathbone sat just behind Mrs. Lincoln and Miss Harris. These four were the only persons in the box.

The play proceeded, although "Our American Cousin," without Mr. Sothorn, has, since that gentleman's departure from this country, been justly esteemed a very dull affair. The audience at Ford's, including Mrs. Lincoln, seemed to enjoy it very much. The worthy wife of the President leaned forward, her hand upon her husband's knee, watching every scene in the drama with amused attention. Even across the President's face at intervals swept a smile, robbing it of its habitual sadness.

About the beginning of the second act, the mare, standing in the stable in the rear of the theater, was disturbed in the midst of her meal by the entrance of the young man who had quitted her in the afternoon. It is presumed that she was saddled and bridled with exquisite care.

Having completed these preparations, Mr. Booth entered the theater by the stage door; summoned one of the scene shifters, Mr. John Spangler, emerged through the same door with that individual, leaving the door open, and left the mare in his hands to be held until he (Booth) should return. Booth who was even more fashionably and richly dressed than usual, walked thence around to the front of the theater, and went in. Ascending to the dress circle, he stood for a little time gazing around upon the audience and occasionally upon the stage in his usual graceful manner. He was subsequently observed by Mr. Ford, the proprietor of the theater, to be slowly elbowing his way through the crowd that packed the rear of the dress circle toward the right side, at the extremity of which was the box where Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln and their companions were seated. Mr. Ford casually noticed this as a slightly extraordinary symptom of interest on the part of an actor so familiar with the routine of the theater and the play.

The curtain had arisen on the third act, *Mrs. Mountchessington* and *Asa Trenchard* were exchanging vivacious stupidities, when a young man, so pre-

cisely resembling the one described as J. Wilkes Booth that he is asserted to be the same, appeared before the open door of the President's box, and prepared to enter.

The servant who attended Mr. Lincoln said politely, "this is the President's box, sir, no one is permitted to enter." "I am a senator," responded the person, "Mr. Lincoln has sent for me." The attendant gave way, and the young man passed into the box.

As he appeared at the door, taking a quick, comprehensive glance at the interior, Major Rathbone arose. "Are you aware, sir," he said, courteously, "upon whom you are intruding? This is the President's box, and no one is admitted." The intruder answered not a word. Fastening his eyes upon Mr. Lincoln, who had half turned his head to ascertain what caused the disturbance, he stepped quickly back without the door.

Without this door there was an eyehole, bored it is presumed on the afternoon of the crime, while the theater was deserted by all save a few mechanics. Glancing through this orifice, John Wilkes Booth espied in a moment the precise position of the President; he wore upon his wrinkling face the pleasant embryo of an honest smile, forgetting in the mimic scene the splendid successes of our arms for which he was responsible, and the history he had filled so well.

The cheerful interior was lost to J. Wilkes Booth. He did not catch the spirit of the delighted audience, of the flaming lamps flinging illumination upon the domestic foreground and the gaily set stage. He only cast one furtive glance upon the man he was to slay, and thrusting one hand in his bosom, another in his skirt pocket, drew forth simultaneously his deadly weapons. His right palm grasped a Derringer pistol, his left a dirk.

Then, at a stride, he passed the threshold again, levelled his arm at the President and bent the trigger.

A keen quick report and a puff of white smoke,—a close smell of powder and the rush of a dark, imperfectly outlined figure,—and the President's head dropped upon his shoulders: the ball was in his brain.

*Illustration: Map.*

*The Theatre and its Surroundings.*

A *Public School.*

B *Herndon House.*

C *Only vacant lot communicating with the Alley.*

D *Only alley outlet to F street.*

E *Bank.*

F *Restaurant.*

G Newspaper Office.

H Model House.

I House to which the President was taken.

K Alley through which the Murderer escaped.

The movements of the assassin were from henceforth quick as the lightning, he dropped his pistol on the floor, and drawing a bowie-knife, struck Major Rathbone, who opposed him, ripping through his coat from the shoulder down, and inflicting a severe flesh wound in his arm. He leaped then upon the velvet covered balustrade at the front of the box, between Mrs. Lincoln and Miss Harris, and, parting with both hands the flags that drooped on either side, dropped to the stage beneath. Arising and turning full upon the audience, with the knife lifted in his right hand above his head, he shouted "*Sic, semper tyrannis—Virginia is avenged!*" Another instant he had fled across the stage and behind the scenes. Colonel J. B. Stewart, the only person in the audience who seemed to comprehend the deed he had committed, climbed from his seat near the orchestra to the stage, and followed close behind. The assassin was too fleet and too desperate, that fury incarnate, meeting Mr. Withers, the leader of the orchestra, just behind the scenes, had stricken him aside with a blow that fortunately was not a wound; overturning Miss Jenny Gourlay, an actress, who came next in his path, he gained, without further hindrance, the back door previously left open at the rear of the theater; rushed through it; leaped upon the horse held by Mr. Spangler, and without vouchsafing that person a word of information, rode out through the alley leading into F street, and thence rapidly away. His horse's hoofs might almost have been heard amid the silence that for a few seconds dwelt in the interior of the theater.

*Illustration:*

A Miss Laura Keene's Position.

D Movable partition wall not in place on Friday.

P Position of the President.

X Flats.

B Dark Passage-way—Position of Sentry.

E Exit, or Stage Door.

MM Entrance to Box.

CCC Entrance to Dress Circle,

H Position of Booth's Horse.

Then Mrs. Lincoln screamed, Miss Harris cried for water, and the full ghastly truth broke upon all—"The President is murdered!" The scene that ensued

was as tumultuous and terrible as one of Dante's pictures of hell. Some women fainted, others uttered piercing shrieks, and cries for vengeance and unmeaning shouts for help burst from the mouths of men. Miss Laura Keene, the actress, proved herself in this awful time as equal to sustain a part in real tragedy as to interpret that of the stage. Pausing one moment before the foot-lights to entreat the audience to be calm, she ascended the stairs in the rear of Mr. Lincoln's box, entered it, took the dying President's head in her lap, bathed it with the water she had brought, and endeavoured to force some of the liquid through the insensible lips. The locality of the wound was at first supposed to be in the breast. It was not until after the neck and shoulders had been bared and no mark discovered, that the dress of Miss Keene, stained with blood, revealed where the ball had penetrated.

This moment gave the most impressive episode in the history of the Continent.

The Chief Magistrate of thirty millions of people—beloved, honored, revered,—lay in the pent up closet of a play-house, dabbling with his sacred blood the robes of an actress.

As soon as the confusion and crowd was partially overcome, the form of the President was conveyed from the theater to the residence of Mr. Peterson, on the opposite side of Tenth street. Here upon a bed, in a little hastily prepared chamber, it was laid and attended by Surgeon-General Barnes and other physicians, speedily summoned.

In the meanwhile the news spread through the capital, as if borne on tongues of flame. Senator Sumner, hearing at his residence, of the affair took a carriage and drove at a gallop to the White House, when he heard where it had taken place, to find Robert Lincoln and other members of the household still unaware of it. Both drove to Ford's Theater, and were soon at the President's bedside. Secretary Stanton and the other members of the cabinet were at hand almost as soon. A vast crowd, surging up Pennsylvania avenue toward Willard's Hotel, cried, "The President is shot!" "President Lincoln is murdered." Another crowd sweeping down the avenue met the first with the tidings, "Secretary Seward has been assassinated in bed." Instantly a wild apprehension of an organized conspiracy and of other murders took possession of the people. The shout "to arms!" was mingled with the expressions of sorrow and rage that everywhere filled the air. "Where is General Grant?" or "where is Secretary Stanton!" "Where are the rest of the cabinet?" broke from thousands of lips. A conflagration of fire is not half so terrible as was the conflagration of passion that rolled through the streets and houses of Washington on that awful night.

The attempt on the life of Secretary Seward was perhaps as daring, if not so dramatic, as the assassination of the President. At 9:20 o'clock a man, tall,

athletic, and dressed in light coloured clothes, alighted from a horse in front of Mr. Seward's residence in Madison place, where the secretary was lying, very feeble from his recent injuries. The house, a solid three-story brick building, was formerly the old Washington Club-house. Leaving his horse standing, the stranger rang at the door, and informed the servant who admitted him that he desired to see Mr. Seward. The servant responded that Mr. Seward was very ill, and that no visitors were admitted. "But I am a messenger from Dr. Verdi, Mr. Seward's physician; I have a prescription which I must deliver to him myself." The servant still demurring, the stranger, without further parley, pushed him aside and ascended the stairs. Moving to the right, he proceeded towards Mr. Seward's room, and was about to enter it, when Mr. Frederick Seward appeared from an opposite doorway and demanded his business. He responded in the same manner as to the servant below, but being met with a refusal, suddenly closed the controversy by striking Mr. Seward a severe and perhaps mortal blow across the forehead with the butt of a pistol. As the first victim fell, Major Seward, another and younger son of the secretary, emerged from his father's room. Without a word the man drew a knife and struck the major several blows with it, rushing into the chamber as he did so; then, after dealing the nurse a horrible wound across the bowels, he sprang to the bed upon which the secretary lay, stabbing him once in the face and neck. Mr. Seward arose convulsively and fell from the bed to the floor. Turning and brandishing his knife anew, the assassin fled from the room, cleared the prostrate form of Frederick Seward in the hall, descended the stairs in three leaps, and was out of the door and upon his horse in an instant. It is stated by a person who saw him mount that, although he leaped upon his horse with most unseemly haste, he trotted away around the corner of the block with circumspect deliberation.

Around both the house on Tenth street and the residence of Secretary Seward, as the fact of both tragedies became generally known, crowds soon gathered so vast and tumultuous that military guards scarcely sufficed to keep them from the doors.

The room to which the President had been conveyed is on the first floor, at the end of the hall. It is only fifteen feet square, with a Brussels carpet, papered with brown, and hung with a lithograph of Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair," an engraved copy of Herring's "Village Blacksmith," and two smaller ones, of "The Stable" and "The Barn Yard," from the same artist. A table and bureau, spread with crotchet work, eight chairs and the bed, were all the furniture. Upon this bed, a low walnut four-poster, lay the dying President; the blood oozing from the frightful wound in his head and staining the pillow. All that the medical skill of half a dozen accomplished surgeons could do had been done to prolong a life evidently ebbing from a mortal hurt.

Secretary Stanton, just arrived from the bedside of Mr. Seward, asked Surgeon-General Barnes what was Mr. Lincoln's condition. "I fear, Mr. Stanton, that there is no hope." "O, no, general; no, no;" and the man, of all others, apparently strange to tears, sank down beside the bed, the hot, bitter evidences of an awful sorrow trickling through his fingers to the floor. Senator Sumner sat on the opposite side of the bed, holding one of the President's hands in his own, and sobbing with kindred grief. Secretary Welles stood at the foot of the bed, his face hidden, his frame shaken with emotion. General Halleck, Attorney-General Speed, Postmaster-General Dennison, M. B. Field, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Judge Otto, General Meigs, and others, visited the chamber at times, and then retired. Mrs. Lincoln—but there is no need to speak of her. Mrs. Senator Dixon soon arrived, and remained with her through the night. All through the night, while the horror-stricken crowds outside swept and gathered along the streets, while the military and police were patrolling and weaving a cordon around the city; while men were arming and asking each other, "What victim next?" while the telegraph was sending the news from city to city over the continent, and while the two assassins were speeding unharmed upon fleet horses far away—his chosen friends watched about the death-bed of the highest of the nation. Occasionally Dr. Gurley, pastor of the church where Mr. Lincoln habitually attended, knelt down in prayer. Occasionally Mrs. Lincoln and her sons, entered, to find no hope and to go back to ceaseless weeping. Members of the cabinet, senators, representatives, generals, and others, took turns at the bedside. Chief-Justice Chase remained until a late hour, and returned in the morning. Secretary McCulloch remained a constant watcher until 5 A. M. Not a gleam of consciousness shone across the visage of the President up to his death—a quiet, peaceful death at last—which came at twenty-two minutes past seven A. M. Around the bedside at this time were Secretaries Stanton, Welles, Usher, Attorney-General Speed, Postmaster-General Dennison, M. B. Field, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Judge Otto, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, General Halleck, General Meigs, Senator Sumner, F. R. Andrews, of New-York, General Todd, of Dacotah, John Hay, private secretary, Governor Oglesby, of Illinois, General Farnsworth, Mrs. and Miss Kenny, Miss Harris, Captain Robert Lincoln, son of the President, and Drs. E. W. Abbott, R. K. Stone, C. D. Gatch, Neal Hall, and Leiberman. Rev. Dr. Gurley, after the event, knelt with all around in prayer, and then, entering the adjoining room where were gathered Mrs. Lincoln, Captain Robert Lincoln, Mr. John Hay, and others, prayed again. Soon after 9 o'clock the remains were placed in a temporary coffin and conveyed to the White House under a small escort.

In Secretary Seward's chamber, a similar although not so solemn a scene prevailed; between that chamber and the one occupied by President Lincoln, visitors alternated to and fro through the night. It had been early ascertained

that the wounds of the secretary were not likely to prove mortal. A wire instrument, to relieve the pain which he suffered from previous injuries, prevented the knife of the assassin from striking too deep. Mr. Frederick Seward's injuries were more serious. His forehead was broken in by the blow from, the pistol, and up to this hour he has remained perfectly unconscious. The operation of trepanning the skull has been performed, but little hope is had of his recovery. Major Seward will get well. Mr. Hansell's condition is somewhat doubtful.

Secretary Seward, who cannot speak, was not informed of the assassination of the President, and the injury of his son, until yesterday. He had been worrying as to why Mr. Lincoln did not visit him. "Why doesn't the President come to see me?" he asked with his pencil. "Where is Frederick—what is the matter with him?" Perceiving the nervous excitement which these doubts occasioned, a consultation was had, at which it was finally determined that it would be best to let the secretary know the worst. Secretary Stanton was chosen to tell him. Sitting down beside Mr. Seward's bed, yesterday afternoon, he therefore related to him a full account of the whole affair. Mr. Seward was so surprised and shocked that he raised one hand involuntarily, and groaned. Such is the condition of affairs at this stage of the terror. The pursuit of the assassins has commenced; the town is full of wild and baseless rumors; much that is said is stirring, little is reliable. I tell it to you as I get it, but fancy is more prolific than truth: be patient!<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The facts above had been collected by Mr. Jerome B. Stillion, before my arrival in Washington: the arrangement of them is my own.

## LETTER II

### THE OBSEQUIES IN WASHINGTON

*Washington, April 19, (Evening).*

The most significant and most creditable celebration ever held in Washington has just transpired. A good ruler has been followed from his home to the Capitol by a grand cortege, worthy of the memory and of the nation's power. As description must do injustice to the extent of the display, so must criticism fail to sufficiently commend its perfect tastefulness. Rarely has a Republican assemblage been so orderly. The funeral of Mr. Lincoln is something to be remembered for a *cycle*. It caps all eulogy upon his life and services, and was, without exception, the most representative, spontaneous, and remarkable testimonial ever rendered to the remains of an American citizen.

The night before the funeral showed the probable character of the cortege. At Willard's alone four hundred applications by telegraph for beds were refused. As many as six thousand persons spent Tuesday night in the streets, in depots and in outbuildings. The population of the city this morning was not far short of a hundred thousand, and of these as many as thirty thousand walked in procession with Mr. Lincoln's ashes.

All orders of folks were at hand. The country adjacent sent in hay-wagons, donkey-carts, dearborns. All who could slip away from the army came to town, and every attainable section of the Union forwarded mourners. At no time in his life had Mr. Lincoln so many to throng about him as in this hour, when he is powerless to do any one a service. For once in history, office-seekers were disinterested, and contractors and hangers-on human. These came, for this time only, to the capital of the republic without an axe to grind or a curiosity to subserve; respect and grief were all their motive. This day was shown that the great public heart beats unselfish and reverent, even after a dynasty of plunder and war.

The arrangements for the funeral were made by Mr. Harrington, Assistant-Secretary of the Treasury, who was beset by applicants for tickets. The number of these were reduced to six hundred, the clergy getting sixty and the press twenty. I was among the first to pass the White House guards and enter the building.

Its freestone columns were draped in black, and all the windows were funereal. The ancient reception-room was half closed, and the famous East room, which is approached by a spacious hall, had been reserved for the obsequies. There are none present here but a few silent attendants of the late owner of the republican palace. Deeply ensconced in the white satin stuffing of his coffin, the President lies like one asleep. The broad, high, beautiful room is like the varnished interior of a vault. The frescoed ceiling wears the national shield, some pointed vases filled with flowers and fruit, and three emblazonings of gilt pendant from which are shrouded chandeliers. A purplish gray is the prevailing tint of the ceiling. The cornice is silver white, set off by a velvet crimson. The wall paper is gold and red, broken by eight lofty mirrors, which are chastely margined with black and faced with fleece.

Their imperfect surfaces reflect the lofty catafalque, an open canopy of solemn alapaca, lined with tasteful satin of creamish lead, looped at the curving roof and dropping to the four corners in half transparent tapestry. Beneath the roof, the half light shines upon a stage of fresh and fragrant flowers, up-bearing a long, high coffin. White lace of pure silver pendant from the border throws a mild shimmer upon the solid silver tracery hinges and emblazonings. A cross of lilies stands at the head, an anchor of roses at the foot. The lid is drawn back to show the face and bosom, and on the coffin top are heather, precious flowers, and sprigs of green. This catafalque, or in plain words, this coffin set upon a platform and canopied, has around it a sufficient space of Brussels carpet, and on three sides of this there are raised steps covered with black, on which the honored visitors are to stand.

The fourth side is bare, save of a single row of chairs some twenty in number, on which the reporters are to sit. The odor of the room is fresh and healthy; the shade is solemn, without being oppressive. All is rich, simple, and spacious, and in such sort as any king might wish to lie. Approach and look at the dead man.

Death has fastened into his frozen face all the character and idiosyncrasy of life. He has not changed one line of his grave, grotesque countenance, nor smoothed out a single feature. The hue is rather bloodless and leaden; but he was always sallow. The dark eyebrows seem abruptly arched; the beard, which will grow no more, is shaved close, save the tuft at the short small chin. The mouth is shut, like that of one who had put the foot down firm, and so are the eyes, which look as calm as slumber. The collar is short and

awkward, turned over the stiff elastic cravat, and whatever energy or humor or tender gravity marked the living face is hardened into its pulseless outline. No corpse in the world is better prepared according to appearances. The white satin around it reflects sufficient light upon the face to show us that death is really there; but there are sweet roses and early magnolias, and the balmiest of lilies strewn around, as if the flowers had begun to bloom even upon his coffin. Looking on uninterruptedly! for there is no pressure, and henceforward the place will be thronged with gazers who will take from the sight its suggestiveness and respect. Three years ago, when little Willie Lincoln died, Doctors Brown and Alexander, the embalmers or injectors, prepared his body so handsomely that the President had it twice disinterred to look upon it. The same men, in the same way, have made perpetual these beloved lineaments. There is now no blood in the body; it was drained by the jugular vein and sacredly preserved, and through a cutting on the inside of the thigh the empty blood vessels were charged with a chemical preparation which soon hardened to the consistence of stone. The long and bony body is now hard and stiff, so that beyond its present position it cannot be moved any more than the arms or legs of a statue. It has undergone many changes. The scalp has been removed, the brain taken out, the chest opened and the blood emptied. All that we see of Abraham Lincoln, so cunningly contemplated in this splendid coffin, is a mere shell, an effigy, a sculpture. He lies in sleep, but it is the sleep of marble. All that made this flesh vital, sentient, and affectionate is gone forever.

The officers present are Generals Hunter and Dyer and two staff captains. Hunter, compact and dark and reticent, walks about the empty chamber in full uniform, his bright buttons and sash and sword contrasting with his dark blue uniform, gauntlets upon his hands, crape on his arm and blade, his corded hat in his hands, a paper collar just apparent above his velvet tips, and now and then he speaks to Captain Nesmith or Captain Dewes, of General Harding's staff, rather as one who wishes company than one who has anything to say. His two silver stars upon his shoulder shine dimly in the draped apartment. He was one of the first in the war to urge the measures which Mr. Lincoln afterward adopted. The aids walk to and fro, selected without reference to any association with the late President. Their clothes are rich, their swords wear mourning, they go in silence, everything is funereal. In the deeply-draped mirrors strange mirages are seen, as in the coffin scene of "Lucretia Borgia," where all the dusky perspectives bear vistas of gloomy palls. The upholsterers make timid noises of driving nails and spreading tapestry; but save ourselves and these few watchers and workers, only the dead is here. The White House, so ill-appreciated in common times, is seen to be capacious and elegant—no disgrace to the nation even in the eyes of those foreign folk of rank who shall gather here directly.

As we sit brooding, with the pall straight before us, the funeral guns are heard indistinctly booming from the far forts, with the tap of drums in the serried street without, where troops and citizens are forming for the grand procession. We see through the window in the beautiful spring day that the grass is brightly green; and all the trees in blossom, show us through their archways the bronze and marble statues breaking the horizon. But there is one at an upper window, seeing all this through her tears, to whom the beautiful noon, with its wealth of zephyrs and sweets, can waft no gratulation. The father of her children, the confidant of her affection and ambition, has passed from life into immortality, and lies below, dumb, cold murdered. The feeling of sympathy for Mrs. Lincoln is as wide-spread as the regret for the chief magistrate. Whatever indiscretions she may have committed in the abrupt transition from plainness to power are now forgiven and forgotten. She and her sons are the property of the nation associated with its truest glories and its worst bereavement. By and by the guests drop in, hat in hand, wearing upon their sleeves waving crape; and some of them slip up to the coffin to carry away a last impression of the fading face.

But the first accession of force is that of the clergy, sixty in number. They are devout looking men, darkly attired, and have come from all the neighboring cities to represent every denomination. Five years ago these were wrangling over slavery as a theological question, and at the beginning of the war it was hard, in many of their bodies, to carry loyal resolutions, To-day there are here such sincere mourners as Robert Pattison, of the Methodist church, who passed much of his life among slaves and masters. He and the rest have come to believe that the President was wise and right, and follow him to his grave, as the apostles the interred on calvary. All these retire to the south end of the room, facing the feet of the corpse, and stand there silently to wait for the coming of others. Very soon this East room is filled with the representative intelligence of the entire nation. The governors of states stand on the dais next to the head of the coffin, with the varied features of Curtin, Brough, Fenton, Stone, Oglesby and Ingraham. Behind them are the mayors and councilmen of many towns paying their last respects to the representative of the source of all municipal freedom. To their left are the corporate officers of Washington, zealous to make this day's funeral honors atone for the shame of the assassination. With these are sprinkled many scarred and worthy soldiers who have borne the burden of the grand war, and stand before this shape they loved in quiet civil reverence.

Still further down the steps and closer to the catafalque rest the familiar faces of many of our greatest generals—the manly features of Augur, whose blood I have seen trickling forth upon the field of battle; the open almost, beardless contour of Halleck, who has often talked of sieges and campaigns

with this homely gentleman who is going to the grave. There are many more bright stars twinkling in contiguous shoulder bars, but sitting in a chair upon the beflowered carpet is Ulysses Grant, who has lived a century in the last three weeks and comes to-day to add the luster of his iron face to this thrilling and saddened picture. He wears white gloves and sash, and is swarthy, nervous, and almost tearful, his feet crossed, his square receding head turning now here now there, his treble constellation blazing upon the left shoulder only, but hidden on the right, and I seem to read upon his compact features the indurate and obstinate will to fight, on the line he has selected, the honor of the country through any peril, as if he had sworn it by the slain man's bier—his state-fellow, patron, and friend. Here also is General McCallum, who has seamed the rebellious South with military roads to send victory along them, and bring back the groaning and the scarred. These and the rest are grand historic figures, worthy of all artistic depiction. They have looked so often into the mortar's mouth, that no bravo's blade can make them wince. Do you see the thin-haired, conical head of the viking Farragut, close by General Grant, with many naval heroes close behind, storm-beaten, and every inch Americans in thought and physiognomy?

What think the foreign ambassadors of such men, in the light of their own overloaded bodies, where meaningless orders, crosses, and ribbons shine dimly in the funeral light? These legations number, perhaps, a hundred men, of all civilized races,—the Sardinian envoy, jetty-eyed, towering above the rest. But they are still and respectful, gathered thus by a slain ruler, to see how worthy is the republic he has preserved. Whatever sympathy these have for our institutions, I think that in such audience they must have been impressed with the futility of any thought that either one citizen right or one territorial inch can ever be torn from the United States. Not to speak disparagingly of these noble guests, I was struck with the superior facial energy of our own public servants, who were generally larger, and brighter-faced, born of that aristocracy which took its patent from Tubal Cain, and Abel the goatherd, and graduated in Abraham Lincoln. The Haytien minister, swarthy and fiery-faced, is conspicuous among these.

But nearer down, and just opposite the catafalque so that it is perpendicular to the direction of vision, stand the central powers of our government, its President and counsellors. President Johnson is facing the middle of the coffin upon the lowest step; his hands are crossed upon his breast, his dark clothing just revealing his plaited shirt, and upon his full, plethoric, shaven face, broad and severely compact, two telling gray eyes rest under a thoughtful brow, whose turning hair is straight and smooth. Beside him are Vice-President Hamlin, whom he succeeded, and ex-Governor King, his most intimate friend, who lends to the ruling severity of the place a half Falstaffian

episode. The cabinet are behind, as if arranged for a daguerreotypist, Stanton, short and quicksilver, in long goatee and glasses, in stunted contrast to the tall and snow-tipped shape of Mr. Welles with the rest, practical and attentive, and at their side is Secretary Chase, high, dignified, and handsome, with folded arms, listening, but undemonstrative, a half-foot higher than any spectator, and dividing with Charles Sumner, who is near by, the preference for manly beauty in age. With Mr. Chase are other justices of the Supreme Court and to their left, near the feet of the corpse, are the reverend senators, representing the oldest and the newest states—splendid faces, a little worn with early and later toils, backed up by the high, classical features of Colonel Forney, their secretary. Beyond are the representatives and leading officials of the various departments, with a few odd folks like George Francis Train, exquisite as ever, and, for this time only, with nothing to say.

Close by the corpse sit the relatives of the deceased, plain, honest, hardy people, typical as much of the simplicity of our institutions as of Mr. Lincoln's self-made eminence. No blood relatives of Mr. Lincoln were to be found. It is a singular evidence of the poverty of his origin, and therefore of his exceeding good report, that, excepting his immediate family, none answering to his name could be discovered. Mrs. Lincoln's relatives were present, however, in some force. Dr. Lyman Beecher Todd, General John B. S. Todd, C. M. Smith, Esq., and Mr. N. W. Edwards, the late President's brother-in-law, plain, self-made people were here and were sincerely affected. Captain Robert Lincoln sat during the services with his face in his handkerchief weeping quietly, and little Tad his face red and heated, cried as if his heart would break. Mrs. Lincoln, weak, worn, and nervous, did not enter the East room nor follow the remains. She was the chief magistrate's lady yesterday; to-day a widow bearing only an immortal name. Among the neighbors of the late President, who came from afar to pay respect to his remains, was one old gentleman who left Richmond on Sunday. I had been upon the boat with him and heard him in hot wrangle with some officers who advised the summary execution of all rebel leaders. This the old man opposed, when the feeling against him became so intense that he was compelled to retire. He counselled mercy, good faith, and forgiveness. To-day, the men who had called him a traitor, saw him among the family mourners, bent with grief. All these are waiting in solemn lines, standing erect, with a space of several feet between them and the coffin, and there is no bustle nor unseemly curiosity, not a whisper, not a footfall—only the collected nation looking with awed hearts upon eminent death.

This scene is historic. I regret that I must tell you of it over a little wire, for it admits of all exemplification. In this high, spacious, elegant apartment, laughter and levee, social pleasantry and refined badinage, had often held

their session. Dancing and music had made those mirrors thrill which now reflect a pall, and where the most beautiful women of their day had mingled here with men of brilliant favor, now only a very few, brave enough to look upon death, were wearing funeral weeds. The pleasant face of Mrs. Kate Sprague looks out from these; but such scenes gain little additional power by beauty's presence. And this wonderful relief was carved at one blow by John Wilkes Booth.

The religious services began at noon. They were remarkable not only for their association with the national event, but for a tremendous political energy which they had. While none of the prayers or speeches exhibited great literary carefulness, or will obtain perpetuity on their own merits, they were full of feeling and expressed all the intense concern of the country.

The procession surpassed in sentiment, populousness, and sincere good feeling, anything of the kind we have had in America. It was several miles long, and in all its elements was full and tasteful. The scene on the avenue will be alway remembered as the only occasion on which that great thoroughfare was a real adornment to the seat of government. In the tree tops, on the house tops, at all the windows, the silent and affected crowds clustered beneath half-mast banners and waving crape, to reverentially uncover as the dark vehicle, bearing its rich silver-mounted coffin, swept along; mot-toes of respect and homage were on many edifices, and singularly some of them were taken from the play of Richard III., which was the murderer's favorite part The entire width of the avenue was swept, from curb to curb, by the deep lines.

The chief excellence of this procession was its representative nature. All classes, localities and trades were out. As the troops in broad, straight columns, with reversed muskets, moved to solemn marches, all the guns on the fortifications on the surrounding hills discharged hoarse salutes—guns which the arbiter of war whom they were to honor could hear no longer. Every business place was closed. Sabermen swept the street of footmen and horsemen. The carriages drove two abreast.

Not less than five thousand officers, of every rank, marched abreast with the cortege. They were noble looking men with intelligent faces, and represented the sinews of the land, and the music was not the least excellent feature of the mournful display. About thirty bands were in the line, and these played all varieties of solemn marches, so that there were continual and mingling strains of funeral music for more than three hours. Artillery, consisting of heavy brass pieces, followed behind. In fact, all the citizen virtues and all the military enterprise of the country were evidenced. Never again, until Washington becomes in fact what it is in name, the chief city of America, shall we have a scene like this repeated—the grandest procession ever seen on this

continent, spontaneously evoked to celebrate the foulest crime on record. If any feeling of gratulation could arise in so calamitous a time, it would be, that so soon after this appalling calamity the nation calmly and collectedly rallied about its succeeding rulers, and showed in the same moment its regret for the past and its resolution for the future. To me, the scene in the White House, the street, and the capitol to-day, was the strongest evidence the war afforded of the stability of our institutions, and the worthiness and magnanimous power of our people.

The cortege passed to the left side of the Capitol, and entering the great gates, passed to the grand stairway, opposite the splendid dome, where the coffin was disengaged and carried up the ascent. It was posted under the bright concave, now streaked with mournful trappings, and left in state, watched by guards of officers with drawn swords. This was a wonderful spectacle, the man most beloved and honored in the ark of the republic. The storied paintings representing eras in its history were draped in sable, through which they seemed to cast reverential glances upon the lamented bier. The thrilling scenes depicted by Trumbull, the commemorative canvases of Leutze, the wilderness vegetation of Powell, glared from their separate pedestals upon the central spot where lay the fallen majesty of the country. Here the prayers and addresses of the noon were rehearsed and the solemn burial service read. At night the jets of gas concealed in the spring of the dome were lighted up, so that their bright reflection masses of burning light, like marvelous haloes, upon the little box where so much that we love and honor rested on its way to the grave. And so through the starry night, in the fane of the great Union he had strengthened and recovered, the ashes of Abraham Lincoln, zealously guarded, are now reposing. The sage, the citizen, the patriot, the man, has reached all the eminence that life can give the worthy or the ambitious. The hunted fugitive who struck through our hearts to slay him, should stand beside his stately bier to see how powerless are bullets and blades to take the real life of any noble man!

## LETTER III

### THE MURDERER

*Washington, April 27th.*

Justice is satisfied, though blinder vengeance may not be. While the illustrious murdered is on the way to the shrine, the stark corpse of his murderer lies in the shambles. The one died quietly, like his life; the other died fighting, like his crime. And now that over all of them the darkness and the dew have descended, the populace, which may not be all satisfied, may perhaps be calmed. No triumphal mourning can add to the President's glory; no further execration can disturb the assassin's slumbers. They have gone for what they were into history, into tradition, into the hereafter both of men and spirits; and what they were may be in part concluded. Mr. Lincoln's career passes, in extent, gravity, and eventful association, the province of newspaper biography; but Booth is the hero of a single deed, and the delineation of him may begin and be exhausted in a single article. I have been at pains, since the day of the President's obsequies, to collect all valid information on the subject of his assassin, in anticipation of the latter's capture and death. Now that these have been consummated, I shall print this biography.

The elder Booth in every land was a sojourner, as all his fathers were. Of Hebrew descent, and by a line of actors, he united in himself that strong Jewish physiognomy which, in its nobler phases, makes all that is dark and beautiful, and the combined vagrancy of all men of genius and all men of the stage. Fitful, powerful, passionate, his life was a succession of vices and triumphs. He mastered the intricate characters of dramatic literature by intuition, rather than by study, and produced them with a vigor and vividness which almost passed the depicting of real life. The stage on which he raved and fought became as historic as the actual decks of battle ships, and his small and brawny figure comes down to us in those paroxysms of delirious art, like that of *Harold*, or *Richard*, or *Prince Rupert*. He drank to excess, was profligate but not generous, required but not reliable, and licentious to

the bounds of cruelty. He threw off the wife of his bosom to fly from England with a flower-girl, and, settling in Baltimore, dwelt with his younger companion, and brought up many children, while his first-possessed went down to a drunken and broken-hearted death. He himself, wandering westward, died on the way, errant and feverish, even in the closing moments. His widow, too conscious of her predecessor's wrongs, and often taunted with them, lived apart, frugal and discreet, and brought her six children up to honorable maturity. These were Junius Brutus, Edwin Forrest (though he drops the Forrest for professional considerations), John Wilkes, Joseph, and the girls. All of the boys are known to more or less of fame; none of them in his art has reached the renown of the father; but one has sent his name as far as that of the great playwright to whom they were pupils; wherever Shakspeare is quoted, John Wilkes Booth will be named, and infamously, like that Hubert in "King John," who would have murdered the gentle Prince Arthur.

It may not be a digression here to ask what has become of the children of the weird genius I have sketched above. Mrs. Booth, against whom calumny has had no word to say, now resides with her daughters in Nineteenth street, New-York. John S. Clarke dwells in princely style in Philadelphia, with the daughter whom he married; he is the business partner of Edwin Booth, and they are likely to become as powerful managers as they have been successful "stars." Edwin Booth, who is said to have the most perfect physical head in America, and whom the ladies call the beau ideal of the melancholy Dane, dwells also on Nineteenth street. He has acquired a fortune, and is, without doubt, a frankly loyal gentleman. He could not well be otherwise from his membership in the Century Club where literature and loyalty, are never dissolved. Correct and pleasing without being powerful or brilliant, he has led a plain and appreciated career, and latterly, to his honor, has been awakening among dramatic authors some emulation by offering handsome compensations for original plays. Junius Brutus Booth, the oldest of them all, most resembles in feature his wild and wayward father; he is not as good an actor as was Wilkes, and kept in the West, that border civilization of the drama; he now lies, on a serious charge of complicity, in Capitol Hill jail. Joseph Booth tried the stage as an utility actor and promptly failed. The best part he ever had to play was *Orson* in the "Iron Chest," and his discomfiture was signal; then he studied medicine but grew discouraged, and is now in California in an office of some sort. A son of Booth by his first wife became a first class lawyer in Boston. He never recognized the rest of the family. Wilkes Booth, the third son, was shot dead on Wednesday for attempting to escape from the consequences of murder. Such are the people to whom one of the greatest actors of our time gave his name and lineaments. But I have anticipated the story:

Although her family was large, it was not so hard sailing with Mrs. Rosalie Booth as may be inferred. Her husband's gains had been variably great, and they owned a farm of some value near Baltimore. The boys had plain but not sufficient schooling, though by the time John Wilkes grew up Edwin and Junius were making some little money and helping the family. So Wilkes was sent to a better school than they, where he made some eventful acquaintances. One of these won his admiration as much in the playground as in subsequent life upon the field of battle; this was Fitzhugh Lee, son of the great rebel chieftain. I have not heard that Lee ever had any friendship for young Wilkes, but his port and name were enough to excite a less ardent imagination—the son of a soldier already great, and a descendant of Washington. Wilkes Booth has often spoken of the memory of the young man, envied his success, and, perhaps, boasted of more intimacy than he ever had. The exemplars of young Wilkes, it was soon seen, were anything but literary. He hated school and pent-up life, and loved the open air. He used to stroll off to fish, though that sort of amusement was too sedentary for his nature, but went on fowling jaunts with enthusiasm. In these latter he manifested that fine nerve, and certain eye, which was the talk of all his associates; but his greatest love was the stable; He learned to ride with his first pair of boots, and hung around the grooms to beg permission to take the nags to water. He grew in later life to be both an indurated and a graceful horseman. Toward his mother and sisters he was affectionate without being obedient. Of all the sons, Wilkes was the most headstrong in-doors, and the most contented away from home. He had a fitful gentleness which won him forgiveness, and of one of his sisters he was particularly fond, but none had influence over him. He was seldom contentious, but obstinately bent, and what he willed, to did in silence, seeming to discard sympathy or confidence. As a boy he was never bright, except in a boy's sense; that is, he could run and leap well, fight when challenged, and generally fell in with the sentiment of the crowd. He therefore made many companions, and his early days all passed between Baltimore city and the adjacent farm.

I have heard it said as the only evidence of Booth's ferocity in those early times that he was always shooting cats, and killed off almost the entire breed in his neighbourhood. But on more than one occasion he ran away from both school and home, and once made the trip of the Chesapeake to the oyster fisheries without advising anybody of his family.

While yet very young, Wilkes Booth became an habitue at the theater. His traditions and tastes were all in that direction. His blood was of the stage, like that of the Keans, the Kembles, and the Wallacks. He would not commence at the bottom of the ladder and climb from round to round, nor take part in more than a few Thespian efforts. One night, however, a young actor, who

was to have a benefit and wished to fill the house, resolved for the better purpose to give Wilkes a chance. He announced that a son of the great Booth of tradition, would enact the part of Richmond, and the announcement was enough. Before a crowded place, Booth played so badly that he was hissed. Still holding to his gossamer hopes and high conceit, Wilkes induced John S. Clarke, who was then addressing his sister, to obtain him a position in the company of the Arch Street Theater at Philadelphia.

For eight dollars a week, Wilkes Booth, at the age of twenty-two, contracted with William Wheatley to play in any piece or part for which he might be cast, and to appear every day at rehearsal. He had to play the *Courier* in Sheridan Knowles's "Wife" on his first night, with five or ten little speeches to make; but such was his nervousness that he blundered continually, and quite balked the piece. Soon afterward he undertook the part of one of the Venetian comrades in Hugo's "Lucretia Borgia," and was to have said in his turn—

"Madame, I am Petruccio Pandolfo;" instead of which he exclaimed:

"Madame, I am Pondolfio Pet-, Pedolfio Pat-, Pantuchio Ped-; damn it? what am I?"

The audience roared, and Booth, though full of chagrin, was compelled to laugh with them.

The very next night he was to play *Dawson*, an important part in Moore's tragedy of "The Gamester." He had bought a new dress to wear on this night, and made abundant preparation to do himself honor. He therefore invited a lady whom he knew to visit the theater, and witness his triumph. But at the instant of his appearance on the stage, the audience, remembering the Petruccio Pandolfo of the previous night, burst into laughter, hisses, and mock applause, so that he was struck dumb, and stood rigid, with nothing whatever to say. Mr. John Dolman, to whose *Stukely* has played, was compelled, therefore, to strike *Dawson* entirely out of the piece.

These occurrences nettled Booth, who protested that he studied faithfully but that his want of confidence ruined him. Mr. Fredericks the stage manager made constant complaints of Booth, who by the way, did not play under his full name, but as Mr. J. Wilkes—and he bore the general reputation of having no promise, and being a careless fellow. He associated freely with such of the subordinate actors as he liked; but being, through Clarke, then a rising favourite, of better connections, might, had he chosen, advanced himself socially, if not artistically. Clarke was to have a benefit one evening, and to enact, among other things, a mock *Richard III.*, to which he allowed Wilkes Booth to play a real *Richmond*. On this occasion, for the first time, Booth showed some energy, and obtain some applause. But, in general, he was

stumbling and worthless I myself remember, on three consecutive nights, hearing him trip up and receive suppressed hisses. He lacked enterprise; other young actors, instead of waiting to be given better parts, committed them to memory, in the hope that their real interpreter might not come to hand. Among these I recall John McCullough, who afterwards became quite a celebrated actor. He was getting, if I correctly remember, only six dollars a week, while Booth obtained eight. Yet Wilkes Booth seemed too slow or indifferent to get on the weather side of such chances. He still held the part of third walking gentleman, and the third is always the first to be walked off in case of strait, as was Wilkes Booth. He did not survive forty weeks engagement, nor make above three hundred dollars in all that time. The Kellers arrived; they cut down the company, and they dispensed with Wilkes Booth. He is remembered in Philadelphia by his failure as in the world by his crime.

About this time a manager named Kunkle gave Booth a salary of twenty dollars a week to go to the Richmond Theater. There he played a higher order of parts, and played them better, Winning applauses from the easy provincial cities, and taking, as everywhere the ladies by storm. I have never wondered why many actors were strongly predisposed toward the South. There, their social status is nine times as big as with us. The hospitable, lounging, buzzing character of the southerner is entirely consonant with the cosmopolitanism of the stage, and that easy "hang-up-your-hativeness," which is the rule and the demand in Thespianism. We place actors outside of society, and execrate them because they are there. The South took them into affable fellowship, and was not ruined by it, but beloved by the fraternity. Booth played two seasons in Richmond, and left in some esteem.

When the John Brown raid occurred, Booth left the Richmond Theater for the scene of strife in a picked company with which he had affiliated for some time. From his connection with the militia on this occasion he was wont to trace his fealty to Virginia. He was a non-commissioned officer, and remained at Charleston till after the execution, visiting the old pike man in jail, and his company was selected to form guard around the scaffold when John Brown went, white-haired, to his account. There may be in this a consolation for the canonizers of the first arm-bearer between the sections, that one whose unit swelled the host to crush out that brave old life, took from the scene inspiration enough to slay a merciful President in his unsuspecting leisure. Booth never referred to John Brown's death in bravado; possibly at that gallows began some such terrible purpose as he afterward consummated.

It was close upon the beginning of the war when Booth resolved to transform himself from a stock actor to a "star." As many will read this who do not understand such distinctions, let me preface it by explaining that a "star"

is an actor who belongs to no one theater, but travels from each to all, playing a few weeks at a time, and sustained in his chief character by the regular or stock actors. A stock actor is a good actor, and a poor fool. A star is an advertisement in tights, who grows rich and corrupts the public taste. Booth was a star, and being so, had an agent. The agent is a trumpeter who goes on before, writing the impartial notices which you see in the editorial columns of country papers and counting noses at the theater doors. Booth's agent was one Matthew Canning, an exploded Philadelphia lawyer, who took to managing by passing the bar, and J. Wilkes no longer, but our country's rising tragedian. J. Wilkes Booth, opened in Montgomery, Alabama, in his father's consecrated part of *Richard III*. It was very different work between receiving eight dollars a week and getting half the gross proceeds of every performance. Booth kept northward when his engagement was done, playing in many cities such parts as *Romeo*, the *Corsican Brothers*, and *Raphael* in the "*Marble Heart*;" in all of these he gained applause, and his journey eastward, ending in eastern cities like Providence, Portland, and Boston was a long success, in part deserved. In Boston he received especial commendation for his enactment of *Richard*.

I have looked over this play, his best and favorite one, to see how closely the career of the crookback he so often delineated resembled his own.

How like that fearful night of *Richard* on Bosworth field must have been Booth's sleep in the barn at Port Royal, tortured by ghosts of victims all repeating.

"When I was mortal my anointed body  
By thee was punched full of deadly  
holes: Think on the Tower and me! Despair and die!"

Or this, from some of Booth's female victims:

"Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow!  
I that was washed to death with  
fulsome wine; Poor Clarence, by thy guile  
betrayed to death: To-morrow in  
the battle think on me; despair and die!"

These terrible conjurations must have recalled how aptly the scene as often rehearsed by Booth, sword in hand, where, leaping from his bed, he cries in horror:

*"Give me another horse! bind up my wounds!  
Have mercy, Jesu! Soft! I did but dream.  
Oh! coward conscience how thou dost afflict me!  
The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight!  
Cold, flareful drops stand on my trembling flesh.  
What do I fear? Myself! there is none else by:  
Is there a murderer here?"*

No!—Yes!—I am!  
Then fly,—what from myself?



*My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale.  
And every tale condemns me for a villain!  
Perjury, perjury in the highest degree:  
Murder, stern murder in the direst degree:  
All several sins, all used in each degree.  
Throng to the bar, crying all, Guilty! guilty!”*

By these starring engagements, Booth made incredible sums. His cashbook, for one single season, showed earnings deposited in bank of twenty-two odd thousand dollars. In New York he did not get a hearing, except at a benefit or two: where he played parts not of his selection. In Philadelphia his earlier failure predisposed the people to discard him, and they did. But he had made enough, and resolved to invest his winnings, The oil fever had just begun; he hired an agent, sent him to the western districts and gave him discretionary power; his investments all turned out profitable.

Booth died, as far as understood without debts. The day before the murder he paid an old friend a hundred dollars which he had borrowed two days previously. He banked at Jay Cook's in Washington, generally; but turned most of his funds into stock and other matters. He gave eighty dollars eight month's ago for a part investing with others in a piece of western oil land. The certificate for this land he gave to his sister. Just before he died his agent informed him that the share was worth fifteen thousand dollars. Booth kept his accounts latterly with great regularity, and was lavish as ever, but took note of all expenditures, however irregular. He was one of those men whom the possession of money seems to have energized; his life, so purposeless long before, grew by good fortune to a strict computation with the world. Yet what availed so sudden reformation, and of what use was the gaining of wealth, to throw one's life so soon away, and leap from competence to hunted infamy.

The beauty of this man and his easy confidentiality, not familiar, but marked by a mild and even dignity, made many women impassioned of him. He was licentious as men, and particularly as actors go, but not a seducer, so far as I can learn. I have traced one case in Philadelphia where a young girl who had seen him on the stage became enamored of him.

She sent him bouquets, notes, photographs and all the accessories of an intrigue. Booth, to whom such things were common, yielded to the girl's importunities at last and gave her an interview. He was surprised to find that so bold a correspondent was so young, so fresh, and so beautiful. He told her therefore, in pity, the consequences of pursuing him; that he entertained no affection for her, though a sufficient desire, and that he was a man of the world to whom all women grew fulsome in their turn.

"Go home," he said, "and beware of actors. They are to be seen, not to be known."

The girl, yet more infatuated, persisted. Booth, who had no real virtue except by scintillations, became what he had promised, and one more soul went to the isles of Cyprus.

In Montgomery, if I do not mistake, Booth met the woman from whom he received a stab which he carried all the rest of his days. She was an actress, and he visited her. They assumed a relation creditable only in *La Boheme*, and were as tender as love without esteem can ever be. But, after a time, Booth wearied of her and offered to say "good by." She refused—he treated her coldly; she pleaded—he passed her by.

Then, with a jealous woman's frenzy, she drew a knife upon him and stabbed him in the neck, with the intent to kill him. Being muscular, he quickly disarmed her, though he afterward suffered from the wound poignantly.

Does it not bring a blush to our faces that a good, great man, like he who has died—our President—should have met his fate from one so inured to a life of ribaldry? Yet, only such an one could have been found to murder Abraham Lincoln.

The women persecuted Booth more than he followed them. He was way-laid by married women in every provincial town or city where he played. His face was so youthful, yet so manly, and his movements so graceful and excellent, that other than the coarse and errant placed themselves in his way. After his celebrated Boston engagement, women of all ages and degrees pressed in crowds before the Tremont House to see him depart. Their motives were various, but whether curiosity or worse, exhibiting plainly the deep influence which Booth had upon the sex. He could be anywhere easy and gentlemanly, and it is a matter of wonder that with the entry which he had to many well-stocked homes, he did not make hospitality mourn and friendship find in his visit shame and ruin. I have not space to go into the millionth catalogue of Booth's intrigues, even if this journal permitted further elucidation of so banned a subject. Most of his adherents of this class were, like Heine's Polish virgins, and he was very popular with those dramatic ladies—few, I hope and

know, in their profession—to whom divorce courts are superfluous. His last permanent acquaintance was one Ella Turner, of Richmond, who loved him with all the impetuosity of that love which does not think, and strove to die at the tidings of his crime and fight. Happy that even such a woman did not die associated with John Wilkes Booth. Such devotion to any other murderer would have earned some poet's tear. But the daisies will not grow a whole rod from *his* grave.

Of what avail, may we ask, on the impossible supposition that Booth's crime could have been considered heroic, was it that such a record should have dared to die for fame? Victory would have been ashamed of its champion, as England of Nelson, and France of Mirabeau.

I may add to this record that he had not been in Philadelphia a year, on first setting out in life, before getting into a transaction of the kind specified. For an affair at his boarding-house he was compelled to pay a considerable sum of money, and it happily occurred just as he was to quit the city. He had many quarrels and narrow escapes through his license, a husband in Syracuse, N. Y., once followed him all the way to Cleveland to avenge a domestic insult.

Booth's paper "To Whom it may Concern" was not his only attempt at influential composition. He sometimes persuaded himself that he had literary ability; but his orthography and pronunciation were worse than his syntax. The paper deposited with J. S. Clarke was useful as showing his power to entertain a deliberate purpose. It has one or two smart passages in it—as this:

"Our once bright red stripes look like *bloody gashes* on the face of heaven."

In the passages following there is common sense and lunacy:

"I know how foolish I shall be deemed for undertaking such a step as this, where, on the one side, I have many friends and everything to make me happy, where my profession *alone*, has gained me an income of *more than* twenty thousand dollars a year, and where my *great personal ambition* in my profession has such a great field for labor. On the other hand, the South have never bestowed upon me one kind word; a place now where I have no friends, except beneath the sod; a place where I must either become a private soldier or a beggar. To give up all of the *former* for the *latter*, besides my mother and sisters, whom I love so dearly (although they so widely differ with me in opinion) seems insane; but God is my judge."

Now, read the beginning of the manifesto, and see how prophetic were his words of his coming infamy. If he expected so much for capturing the President merely, what of our execration at slaying him?

"Right or wrong, God judge me, not man. For be my motive good or bad, of one thing I am sure, *the lasting condemnation* of the North.

"I love peace more than life. Have loved the Union beyond expression. For four years have I waited, hoped and prayed for the dark clouds to break, and for a restoration of our former sunshine. *To wait longer would be a crime.* All hope for peace is dead. My prayers have proved as idle as my hopes. God's will be done. *I go to see and share the bitter end.*"

To wait longer would be a crime. Oh! what was the crime *not* to wait! Had he only shared the bitter end, then, in the common trench, his memory might have been hidden. The end had come when he appeared to make of benignant victory a quenchless revenge. One more selection from his apostrophe will do. It suggests the manner of his death:

"They say that the South has found *that* 'last ditch' which the North have so long derided. Should I reach her in safety, and find it true, I will proudly beg permission to triumph or die in that same 'ditch' by her side." The swamp near which he died may be called, without unseemly pun—a truth, not a *bon mot*—the last ditch of the rebellion.

None of the printed pictures that I have seen do justice to Booth. Some of the *cartes de visite* get him very nearly. He had one of the finest vital heads I have ever seen. In fact, he was one of the best exponents of vital beauty I have ever met. By this I refer to physical beauty in the Medician sense—health, shapeliness, power in beautiful poise, and seemingly more powerful in repose than in energy. His hands and feet were sizable, not small, and his legs were stout and muscular, but inclined to bow like his father's. From the waist up he was a perfect man; his chest being full and broad, his shoulders gently sloping, and his arms as white as alabaster, but hard as marble. Over these, upon a neck which was its proper column, rose the cornice of a fine Doric face, spare at the jaws and not anywhere over-ripe, but seamed with a nose of Roman model, the only relic of his half-Jewish parentage, which gave decision to the thoughtfully stern sweep of two direct, dark eyes, meaning to woman snare, and to man a search warrant, while the lofty square forehead and square brows were crowned with a weight of curling jetty hair, like a rich Corinthian capital. His profile was eagleish, and afar his countenance was haughty. He seemed throat full of introspections, ambitious self-examinings, eye-strides into the future, as if it withheld him something to which he had a right. I have since wondered whether this moody demeanor did not come of a guilty spirit, but all the Booths look so.

Wilkes spoke to me in Washington for the first time three weeks before the murder. His address was winning as a girl's, rising in effect not from what he said, but from how he said it. It was magnetic, and I can describe it therefore by its effects alone. I seemed, when he had spoken, to lean toward this man. His attitude spoke to me; with as easy familiarity as I ever observed he drew rear and conversed. The talk was on so trite things that it did not lie a second

in the head, but when I left him it was with the feeling that a most agreeable fellow had passed by.

The next time the name of Wilkes Booth recurred to me was like the pistol shot he had fired. The right hand I had shaken murdered the father of the country.

Booth was not graceful with his feet, although his ordinary walk was pleasant enough. But his arms were put to artistic uses; not the baser ones like boxing, but all sorts of fencing, manual practice, and the handling of weapons.

In his dress, he was neat without being particular. Almost any clothes could fit him; but he had nothing of the exquisite about him; his neckties and all such matters were good without being gaudy. Nature had done much for him. In this beautiful palace an outlaw had builded his fire, and slept, and plotted, and dreamed.

I have heard it said that Booth frequently cut his adversaries upon the stage in sheer wantonness or bloodthirstiness. This is a mistake, and is attributable to his father, the elder Booth, who had the madness of confounding himself with the character. Wilkes was too good a fencer to make ugly gashes; his pride was his skill, not his awkwardness. Once

he was playing with John McCullough in the last act of "Richard." They were fighting desperately. Suddenly the cross-piece on the hilt of McCullough's sword flew off and cut the owner deeply in the forehead. Blood ran down McCullough's face, though they continued to struggle, and while, ostensibly, Booth was imitating a demon, he said in a half whisper:

"Good God, John, did I hurt you?"

And when they went off the stage, Booth was white with fear that he had gashed his friend.

As an actor, Booth was too energetic to be correct; his conception of Richard was vivid and original, one of the best that we have had, and he came nearer his father's rendering of the last act than any body we have had. His combat scene was terrific. The statement that his voice had failed has no valid foundation; it was as good when he challenged the cavalry-men to combat as in the best of his Thespian successes. In all acting that required delicate characterization, refined conception or carefulness, Booth was at sea. But in strong physical parts, requiring fair reading and an abundance of spring and tension, he was much finer than hearsay would have us believe.

His *Romeo* was described a short time ago by the *Washington Intelligencer* as the most satisfactory of all renderings of that fine character. He played the *Corsican Brothers* three weeks on a run in Boston. He played *Pescara* at Ford's Theater—his last mock part in this world—on to-morrow (Saturday) night, six weeks ago.

He was fond of learning and reciting fugitive poems. His favorite piece was "The Beautiful Snow" comparing it to a lost purity. He has been known by gentlemen in this city to recite this poem with fine effect, and cry all the while. This was on the principle of "guilty people sitting at a play." His pocket-book was generally full of little selections picked up at random, and he had considerable delicacy of appreciation.

On the morning of the murder, Booth breakfasted with Miss Carrie Bean, the daughter of a merchant, and a very respectable young lady, at the National Hall. He arose from the table at, say eleven o'clock. During the breakfast, those who watched him say that he was lively, piquant and self-possessed as ever in his life.

That night the horrible crime thrilled the land. A period of crippled flight succeeded. Living in swamps, upon trembling hospitality, upon hopes which sank as he leaned upon them. Booth passed the nights in perilous route or broken sleep, and in the end went down like a bravo, but in the eyes of all who read his history, commanding no respect for his valor, charity for his motive, or sympathy for his sin.

The closing scenes of these terrible days are reserved for a second paper. Much matter that should have gone into this is retained for the present.

# LETTER IV

## THE ASSASSIN'S DEATH

*Washington, April 28—8 P. M.*

A hard and grizzly face overlooks me as I write. Its inconsiderable forehead is crowned with turning sandy hair, and the deep concave of its long insatiate jaws is almost hidden by a dense red beard, which can not still abate the terrible decision of the large mouth, so well sustained by searching eyes of spotted gray, which roll and rivet one. This is the face of Lafayette Baker, colonel and chief of the secret service. He has played the most perilous parts of the war, and is the capturer of the late President's murderer. The story that I am to tell you, as he and his trusty dependents told it to me, will be aptly commenced here, where the net was woven which took the dying life of Wilkes Booth.

When the murder occurred, Colonel Baker was absent from Washington, He returned on the third morning, and was at once besought by Secretary Stanton to join the hue and cry against the escaped Booth. The sagacious detective found that nearly ten thousand cavalry, and one-fourth as many policemen, had been meantime scouring, without plan or compass, the whole territory of Southern Maryland. They were treading on each other's heels, and mixing up the thing so confoundedly, that the best place for the culprits to have gone would have been in the very midst of their pursuers. Baker at once possessed himself of the little the War Department had learned, and started immediately to take the usual detective measures, till then neglected, of offering a reward and getting out photographs of the suspected ones. He then dispatched a few chosen detectives to certain vital points, and awaited results.

The first of these was the capture of Atzeroth. Others, like the taking of Dr. Mudge, simultaneously occurred. But the district suspected being remote from the railway routes, and broken by no telegraph station, the colonel, to place

himself nearer the theater of events, ordered an operator, with the necessary instrument, to tap the wire running to Point Lookout, near Chappells Point, and send him prompt messages.

The same steamer which took down the operator and two detectives, brought back one of the same detectives and a negro. This negro, taken to Colonel Baker's office, stated so positively that he had seen Booth and another man cross the Potomac in a fishing boat, while he was looking down upon them from a bank, that the colonel, was at first skeptical; but when examined the negro answered so readily and intelligently, recognizing the men from the photographs, that Baker knew at last that he had the true scent.

Straightway he sent to General Hancock for twenty-five men, and while the order was going, drew down his coast survey-maps. With that quick detective intuition amounting almost to inspiration, he cast upon the probable route and destination of the refugees, as well as the point where he would soonest strike them. Booth, he knew, would not keep along the coast, with frequent deep rivers to cross, nor, indeed, in any direction east of Richmond, where he was liable at any time to cross our lines of occupation; nor, being lame, could he ride on; horseback, so as to place himself very far westward of his point of debarkation in Virginia. But he would travel in a direct course from Bluff point, where he crossed to Eastern Tennessee, and this would take him through Port Royal on the Rappahannock river, in time to be intercepted there by the outgoing cavalry men.

When, therefore, twenty-five men, under one Lieutenant Dougherty, arrived at his office door, Baker placed the whole under control of his former lieutenant-colonel, E. J. Conger, and of his cousin, Lieutenant L. B. Baker—the first of Ohio, the last of New-York—and bade them go with all dispatch to Belle Plain on the Lower Potomac, there to disembark, and scour the country faithfully around Port Royal, but not to return unless they captured their men.

Conger is a short, decided, indomitable, courageous fellow, provincial in his manners, but fully understanding his business, and collected as a housewife on Sunday.

Young Baker is large and fine-looking—a soldier, but no policeman—and he deferred to Conger, very properly, during most of the events succeeding.

Quitting Washington at 2 o'clock P. M. on Monday, the detectives and cavalrymen disembarked at Belle Plain, on the border of Stafford county, at 10 o'clock, in the darkness. Belle Plain is simply the nearest landing to Fredericksburg, seventy miles from Washington city, and located upon Potomac creek. It is a wharf and warehouse merely, and here the steamer John S. Ide stopped and made fast, while the party galloped off in the darkness. Con-

ger and Baker kept ahead, riding up to farm-houses and questioning the inmates, pretending to be in search of the Maryland gentlemen belonging to the party. But nobody had seen the parties described, and, after a futile ride on the Fredericksburg road, they turned shortly to the east, and kept up their baffled inquiries all the way to Port Conway, on the Rappahannock.

On Tuesday morning they presented themselves at the Port Royal ferry, and inquired of the ferry-man, while he was taking them over in squads of seven at a time, if he had seen any two such men. Continuing their inquiries at Port Royal, they found one Rollins a fisherman, who referred them to a negro named Lucas, as having driven two men a short distance toward Bowling Green in a wagon. It was found that these men answered to the description, Booth having a crutch as previously ascertained.

The day before Booth and Harold had applied at Port Conway for the general ferry-boat, but the ferryman was then fishing and would not desist for the inconsiderable fare of only two persons, but to their supposed good fortune a lot of confederate cavalymen just then came along, who threatened the ferryman with a shot in the head if he did not instantly bring across his craft and transport the entire party. These cavalymen were of Moseby's disbanded command, returning from Fairfax Court House to their homes in Caroline county. Their captain was on his way to visit a sweetheart at Bowling Green, and he had so far taken Booth under his patronage, that when the latter was haggling with Lucas for a team, he offered both Booth and Harold the use of his horse, to ride and walk alternately.

In this way Lucas was providentially done out of the job, and Booth rode off toward Bowling Green behind the confederate captain on one and the same horse.

So much learned, the detectives, with Rollins for a guide, dashed off in the bright daylight of Tuesday, moving southwestward through the level plains of Caroline, seldom stopping to ask questions, save at a certain halfway house, where a woman told them that the cavalry party of yesterday had returned minus one man. As this was far from circumstantial, the party rode along in the twilight, and reached Bowling Green at eleven o'clock in the night.

This is the court-house town of Caroline county—a small and scattered place, having within it an Ancient tavern, no longer used for other than lodging purposes; but here they hauled from his bed the captain aforesaid, and bade him dress himself. As soon as he comprehended the matter he became pallid and eagerly narrated all the facts in his possession. Booth, to his knowledge, was then lying at the house of one Garrett, which they had passed, and Harold had departed the existing day with the intention of re-joining him.

Taking this captain along for a guide, the worn out horsemen retraced, though some of the men were so haggard and wasted with travel that they had to be kicked into intelligence before they could climb to their saddles. The objects of the chase thus at hand, the detectives, full of sanguine purpose; hurried the cortege so well along that by 2 o'clock early morning, all halted at Garrett's gate. In the pale moonlight three hundred yards from the main road, to the left, a plain old farmhouse looked grayly through its enviroing locusts. It was worn and whitewashed, and two-storied, and its half-human windows glowered down upon the silent cavalymen like watching owls, which stood as sentries over some horrible secret asleep within. The front of this house looked up the road toward the Rappahannock, but did not face it, and on that side a long Virginia porch protruded, where, in the summer, among the honeysuckles, the humming bird flew like a visible odor. Nearest the main road, against the pallid gable, a single-storied kitchen stood, and there were three other doors, one opening upon the porch, one in the kitchen gable, and one in the rear of the farmhouse.

Dimly seen behind, an old barn, high and weather-beaten, faced the road-side gate, for the house itself lay to the left of its own lane; and nestling beneath the barn, a few long corn-cribs lay with a cattle shed at hand. There was not a swell of the landscape anywhere in sight. A plain dead level contained all the tenements and structures. A worm fence stretched along the road broken by two battered gate posts, and between the road and the house, the lane was crossed by a second fence and gate. The farm-house lane, passing the house front, kept straight on to the barn, though a second carriage track ran up to the porch.

*Illustration: Plan of Garrett's House.*

*A Door through which the dying man was brought.*

*B Corner at which the barn was fired.*

*C Spot in the barn on which Booth stood.*

*D Point where Corbett fired.*

*E Porch where Booth died.*

*G Door at which Lieutenant Baker knocked.*

*H Shed.*

*I Kitchen.*

It was a homely and primitive scene enough, pastoral as any farm boy's birth-place, and had been the seat of many toils and endearments. Young wives had been brought to it, and around its hearth the earliest cries of infants, gladdening mothers' hearts, had made the household jubilant till the stars came out, and were its only sentries, save the bright lights at its

window-panes as of a camp-fire, and the suppressed chorusses of the domestic bivouac within, where apple toasting and nut cracking and country games shortened the winter shadows. Yet in this house, so peaceful by moonlight, murder had washed its spotted hands, and ministered to its satiated appetite. History—present in every nook in the broad young world—had stopped, to make a landmark of Garrett's farm.

In the dead stillness, Baker dismounted and forced the outer gate; Conger kept close behind him, and the horsemen followed cautiously. They made no noise in the soft clay, nor broke the all-foreboding silence anywhere, till the second gate swung open gratingly, yet even then nor hoarse nor shrill response came back, save distant croaking, as of frogs or owls, or the whizz of some passing night-hawk. So they surrounded the pleasant old homestead, each horseman, carbine in poise, adjusted under the grove of locusts, so as to inclose the dwelling with a circle of fire. After a pause, Baker rode to the kitchen door on the side, and dismounting, rapped and halloed lustily. An old man, in drawers and night-shirt, hastily undrew the bolts, and stood on the threshold, peering shiveringly into the darkness.

Baker seized him by the throat at once, and held a pistol to his ear. "Who—who is it that calls me?" cried the old man. "Where are the men who stay with you?" challenged Baker. "If you prevaricate you are a dead man!" The old fellow, who proved to be the head of the family, was so overawed and paralysed that he stammered, and shook, and said not a word. "Go light a candle," cried Baker, sternly, "and be quick about it." The trembling old man obeyed, and in a moment the imperfect rays flared upon his whitening hairs and bluishly pallid face. Then the question was repeated, backed up by the glimmering pistol, "where are those men?" The old man held to the wall, and his knees smote each other. "They are gone," he said. "We hav'n't got them in the house, I assure you that they are gone." Here there were sounds and whisperings in the main building adjoining, and the lieutenant strode to the door. A ludicrous instant intervened, the old man's modesty outran his terror. "Don't go in there," he said, feebly; "there are women undressed in there." "Damn the women," cried Baker; "what if they are undressed? We shall go in if they haven't a rag." Leaving the old man in mute astonishment, Baker bolted through the door, and stood in an assemblage of bare arms and night robes. His loaded pistol disarmed modesty of its delicacy and substituted therefor a seasonable terror. Here he repeated his summons, and the half light of the candle gave to his face a more than bandit ferocity. They all denied knowledge of the strangers' whereabouts.

In the interim Conger had also entered, and while the household and its invaders were thus in weird tableaux, a young man appeared, as if he had risen from the ground. The muzzles of everybody turned upon him in a

second; but, while he blanched, he did not lose loquacity. "Father," he said, "we had better tell the truth about the matter. Those men whom you seek, gentlemen, are in the barn, I know. They went there to sleep." Leaving one soldier to guard the old man—and the soldier was very glad of the job, as it relieved him of personal hazard in the approaching combat—all the rest, with cocked pistols at the young man's head, followed on to the barn. It lay a hundred yards from the house, the front barndoor facing the west gable, and was an old and spacious structure, with floors only a trifle above the ground level.

The troops dismounted, were stationed at regular intervals around it, and ten yards distant at every point, four special guards placed to command the door and all with weapons in supple preparation, while Baker and Conger went direct to the portal. It had a padlock upon it, and the key of this Baker secured at once. In the interval of silence that ensued, the rustling of planks and straw was heard inside, as of persons rising from sleep.

At the same moment Baker hailed:

"To the persons in this barn. I have a proposal to make; we are about to send in to you the son of the man in whose custody you are found. Either surrender to him your arms and then give yourselves up, or we'll set fire to the place. We mean to take you both, or to have a bonfire and a shooting match."

No answer came to this of any kind. The lad, John M. Garrett, who was in deadly fear, was here pushed through the door by a sudden opening of it, and immediately Lieutenant Baker locked the door on the outside. The boy was heard to state his appeal in under tone. Booth replied:

"Damn you. Get out of here. You have betrayed me."

At the same time he placed his hand in his pocket as for a pistol. A remonstrance followed, but the boy slipped quickly over the reopened portal, reporting that his errand had failed, and that he dared not enter again. All this time the candle brought from the house to the barn was burning close beside the two detectives, rendering it easy for any one within to have shot them dead. This observed, the light was cautiously removed, and everybody took care to keep out of its reflection. By this time the crisis of the position was at hand, the cavalry exhibited very variable inclinations, some to run away, others to shoot Booth without a summons, but all excited and fitfully silent. At the house near by the female folks were seen collected in the doorway, and the necessities of the case provoked prompt conclusions. The boy was placed at a remote point, and the summons repeated by Baker:

"You must surrender inside there. Give up your arms and appear. There is no chance for escape. We give you five minutes to make up your mind."

A bold, clarion reply came from within, so strong as to be heard at the house door:

“Who are you, and what do you want with us?”

Baker again urged: “We want you to deliver up your arms and become our prisoners.”

“But who are you?” halloed the same strong voice.

Baker.—“That makes no difference. We know who you are, and we want you. We have here fifty men, armed with carbines and pistols. You cannot escape.”

There was a long pause, and then Booth said:

“Captain, this is a hard case, I swear. Perhaps I am being taken by my own friends.” No reply from the detectives.

Booth—“Well, give us a little time to consider.”

*Illustration:*

*Garrett’s House,  
Where Booth Died*

*—Sketched by W. N. Walton, for “Harper’s Weekly” for May 30th,  
1865]*

Baker—“Very well. Take time.”

Here ensued a long and eventful pause. What thronging memories it brought to Booth, we can only guess. In this little interval he made the resolve to die. But he was cool and steady to the end. Baker, after a lapse, hailed for the last time.

“Well, we have waited long enough; surrender your arms and come out, or we’ll fire the barn.”

Booth answered thus: “I am but a cripple, a one-legged man. Withdraw your forces one hundred yard from the door, and I will come. Give me a chance for my life, captain. I will never be taken alive.”

Baker—“We did not come here to fight, but to capture you. I say again, appear, or the barn shall be fired.”

Then with a long breath, which could be heard outside, Booth cried in sudden calmness, still invisible, as were to him his enemies:

“Well, then, my brave boys, prepare a stretcher for me.”

There was a pause repeated, broken by low discussions within between Booth and his associate, the former saying, as if in answer to some remonstrance or appeal, "Get away from me. You are a damned coward, and mean to leave me in my distress; but go, go. I don't want you to stay. I won't have *you* stay." Then he shouted aloud:

"There's a man inside who wants to surrender."

Baker—"Let him come, if he will bring his arms."

Here Harold, rattling at the door, said: "Let me out; open the door; I want to surrender."

Baker—"Hand out your arms, then."

Harold—"I have not got any."

Baker—"You are the man that carried the carbine yesterday; bring it out."

Harold—"I haven't got any."

This was said in a whining tone, and with an almost visible shiver. Booth cried aloud, at this hesitation: "He hasn't got any arms; they are mine, and I have kept them."

Baker—"Well, he carried the carbine, and must bring it out."

Booth—"On the word and honor of a gentleman, he has no arms with him. They are mine, and I have got them."

At this time Harold was quite up to the door, within whispering distance of Baker. The latter told him to put out his hands to be handcuffed, at the same time drawing open the door a little distance. Harold thrust forth his hands, when Baker, seizing him, jerked him into the night, and straightway delivered him over to a deputation of cavalrymen. The fellow began to talk of his innocence and plead so noisily that Conger threatened to gag him unless he ceased. Then Booth made his last appeal, in the same clear unbroken voice:

"Captain, give me a chance. Draw off your men and I will fight them singly. I could have killed you six times to-night, but I believe you to be a brave man, and would not murder you. Give a lame man a show."

It was too late for parley. All this time Booth's voice had sounded from the middle of the barn.

Ere he ceased speaking, Colonel Conger, slipping around to the rear, drew some loose straws through a crack, and lit a match upon them. They were dry and blazed up in an instant, carrying a sheet of smoke and flame through the parted planks, and heaving in a twinkling a world of light and heat upon the magazine within. The blaze lit up the black recesses of the great barn till every wasp's nest and cobweb in the roof was luminous, flinging streaks of red

and violet across the tumbled farm gear in the corner, plows, harrows, hoes, rakes, sugar mills, and making every separate grain in the high bin adjacent, gleam like a mote of precious gold. They tinged the beams, the upright columns, the barricades, where clover and timothy, piled high, held toward the hot incendiary their separate straws for the funeral pile. They bathed the murderer's retreat in beautiful illumination, and while in bold outline his figure stood revealed, they rose like an impenetrable wall to guard from sight the hated enemy who lit them. Behind the blaze, with his eye to a crack, Conger saw Wilkes Booth standing upright upon a crutch. He likens him at this instant to his brother Edwin, whom he says he so much resembled that he half believed, for the moment the whole pursuit to have been a mistake. At the gleam of the fire Wilkes dropped his crutch, and, carbine in both hands, crept up to the spot to espy the incendiary and shoot him dead. His eyes were lustrous like fever, and swelled and rolled in terrible beauty, while his teeth were fixed, and he wore the expression of one in the calmness before frenzy. In vain he peered with vengeance in his look; the blaze that made him visible concealed his enemy. A second he turned glaring at the fire, as if to leap upon it and extinguish it, but it had made such headway that this was a futile impulse and he dismissed it. As calmly as upon the battlefield a veteran stands amidst the hail of ball and shell, and plunging iron, Booth turned at a man's stride, and pushed for the door, carbine in poise, and the last resolve of death, which we name despair, set on his high, bloodless forehead.

As so he dashed, intent to expire not unaccompanied, a disobedient sergeant at an eye-hole drew upon him the fatal bead. The barn was all glorious with conflagration and in the beautiful ruin this outlawed man strode like all that, we know of wicked valor, stern in the face of death. A shock, a shout, a gathering up of his splendid figure as if to overtip the stature God gave him, and John Wilkes Booth fell headlong to the floor, lying there in a heap, a little life remaining.

"He has shot himself!" cried Baker, unaware of the source of the report, and rushing in, he grasped his arms to guard against any feint or strategy. A moment convinced him that further struggle with the prone flesh was useless. Booth did not move, nor breathe, nor gasp. Conger and two sergeants now entered, and taking up the body, they bore it in haste from the advancing flame, and laid it without upon the grass, all fresh with heavenly dew.

"Water," cried Conger, "bring water."

When this was dashed into his face, he revived a moment and stirred his lips. Baker put his ear close down, and heard him say:

"Tell mother—and die—for my country."

They lifted him again, the fire encroaching in hotness upon them and placed him on the porch before the dwelling.

A mattress was brought down, on which they placed him and propped his head, and gave him water and brandy. The women of the household, joined meantime by another son, who had been found in one of the corn cribs, watching as he said, to see that Booth and Harold did not steal the horses, were nervous, but prompt to do the dying man all kindnesses, although waived sternly back by the detectives. They dipped a rag in brandy and water, and this being put between Booth's teeth he sucked it greedily. When he was able to articulate again, he muttered to Mr. Baker the same words, with an addenda. "Tell mother I died for my country. I thought I did for the best." Baker repeated this, saying at the same time "Booth, do I repeat it correctly." Booth nodded his head. By this time the grayness of dawn was approaching; moving figures inquisitively coming near were to be seen distinctly, and the cocks began to crow gutturally, though the barn was a hulk of blaze and ashes, sending toward the zenith a spiral line of dense smoke. The women became importunate that the troops might be ordered to extinguish the fire, which was spreading toward their precious corn-cribs. Not even death could banish the call of interest. Soldiers were sent to put out the fire, and Booth, relieved of the bustle around him, drew near to death apace. Twice he was heard to say, "kill me, kill me." His lips often moved but could complete no appreciable sound. He made once a motion which the quick eye of Conger understood to mean that his throat pained him. Conger put his finger there, when the dying man attempted to cough, but only caused the blood at his perforated neck to flow more, lively. He bled very little, although shot quite through, beneath and behind the ears, his collar being severed on both sides.

A soldier had been meanwhile despatched for a doctor, but the route and return were quite six miles, and the sinner was sinking fast. Still the women made efforts to get to see him, but were always rebuffed, and all the brandy they could find was demanded by the assassin, who motioned for strong drink every two minutes. He made frequent desires to be turned over, not by speech, but by gesture, and was alternately placed upon his back, belly and side. His tremendous vitality evidenced itself almost miraculously. Now and then, his heart would cease to throb, and his pulses would be as cold as a dead man's. Directly life would begin anew, the face would flush up effulgently, the eyes open and brighten, and soon relapsing, stillness re-asserted, would again be dispossessed by the same magnificent triumph of man over mortality. Finally the fussy little doctor arrived, in time to be useless. He probed the wound to see if the ball were not in it, and shook his head sagely, and talked learnedly.

Just at his coming Booth had asked to have his hands raised and shown him. They were so paralyzed that he did not know their location. When they were displayed he muttered, with a sad lethargy, "Useless, useless." These were the last words he ever uttered. As he began to die the sun rose and threw beams into all the tree-tops. It was of a man's height when the struggle of death twitched and fingered in the fading bravo's face. His jaw drew spasmodically and obliquely downward; his eyeballs rolled toward his feet, and began to swell; lividness, like a horrible shadow, fastened upon him, and, with a sort of gurgle and sudden check, he stretched his feet and threw his head back and gave up the ghost.

They sewed him up in a saddle blanket. This was his shroud; too like a soldier's. Harold, meantime, had been tied to a tree, but was now released for the march. Colonel Conger pushed on immediately for Washington; the cortege was to follow. Booth's only arms were his carbine knife, and two revolvers. They found about him bills of exchange, Canada money, and a diary. A venerable old negro living in the vicinity had the misfortune to possess a horse. This horse was a relic of former generations, and showed by his protruding ribs the general leanness of the land. He moved in an eccentric amble, and when put upon his speed was generally run backward. To this old negro's horse was harnessed a very shaky and absurd wagon, which rattled like approaching dissolution, and each part of it ran without any connection or correspondence with any other part. It had no tail-board, and its shafts were sharp as famine; and into this mimicry of a vehicle the murderer was to be sent to the Potomac river, while the man he had murdered was moving in state across the mourning continent. The old negro geared up his wagon by means of a set of fossil harness, and when it was backed to Garrett's porch, they laid within it the discolored corpse. The corpse was tied with ropes around the legs and made fast to the wagon sides. Harold's legs were tied to stirrups, and he was placed in the centre of four murderous looking cavalymen. The two sons of Garrett were also taken along, despite the sobs and petitions of the old folks and women, but the rebel captain who had given Booth a lift, got off amidst the night's agitations, and was not re-arrested. So moved the cavalcade of retribution, with death in its midst, along the road to Port Royal. When the wagon started, Booth's wound till now scarcely dribbling, began to run anew. It fell through the crack of the wagon, dripping upon the axle, and spotting the road with terrible wafers. It stained the planks, and soaked the blankets; and the old negro, at a stoppage, dabbled his hands in it by mistake; he drew back instantly, with a shudder and stifled expletive, "Gor-r-r, dat'll never come off in de world; it's murderer's blood." He wrung his hands, and looked imploringly at the officers, and shuddered again: "Gor-r-r, I wouldn't have dat on me fur tousand, tousand dollars." The progress of the team was slow, with frequent danger of

shipwreck altogether, but toward noon the cortege filed through Port Royal, where the citizens came out to ask the matter, and why a man's body, covered with sombre blankets, was going by with so great escort. They were told that it was a wounded confederate, and so held their tongues. The little ferry, again in requisition, took them over by squads, and they pushed from Port Conway to Bell Plain, which they reached in the middle of the afternoon. All the way the blood dribbled from the corpse in a slow, incessant, sanguine exudation. The old negro was niggardly dismissed with two paper dollars. The dead man untied and cast upon the vessel's dock, steam gotten up in a little while, and the broad Potomac shores saw this skeleton ship flit by, as the bloody sun threw gashes and blots of unhealthy light along the silver surface.

All the way associate with the carcass, went Harold, shuddering in so grim companionship, and in the awakened fears of his own approaching, ordeal, beyond which it loomed already, the gossamer fabric of a scaffold. He tried to talk for his own exoneration, saying he had ridden, as was his wont, beyond the East Branch, and returning, found Booth wounded, who begged him to be his companion. Of his crime he knew nothing, so help him God, &c. But nobody listened to him. All interest of crime, courage, and retribution centered in the dead flesh at his feet. At Washington, high and low turned out to look on Booth. Only a few were permitted to see his corpse for purposes of recognition. It was fairly preserved, though on one side of the face distorted, and looking blue like death, and wildly bandit-like, as if beaten by avenging winds.

Yesterday the Secretary of War, without instructions of any kind, committed to Colonel Lafayette C. Baker, of the secret service, the stark corpse of J. Wilkes Booth. The secret service never fulfilled its volition more secretly. "What have you done with the body?" said I to Baker. "That is known" he answered, "to only one man living besides myself. It is gone. I will not tell you where. The only man who knows is sworn to silence. Never till the great trumpeter comes shall the grave of Booth be discovered." And this is true. Last night, the 27th of April, a small row boat received the carcass of the murderer; two men were in it they carried the body off into the darkness, and out of that darkness it will never return. In the darkness, like his great crime, may it remain forever, impalpable, invisible, nondescript, condemned to that worse than damnation,—annihilation. The river-bottom may ooze about it laden with great shot and drowning manacles. The earth may have opened to give it that silence and forgiveness which man will never give its memory. The fishes may swim around it, or the daisies grow white above it; but we shall never know. Mysterious, incomprehensible, unattainable, like the dim times through which we live and think upon as if we only dreamed them

in perturbed fever, the assassin of a nation's head rests somewhere in the elements, and that is all; but if the indignant seas or the profaned turf shall ever vomit his corpse from their recesses, and it receive humane or Christian burial from some who do not recognize it, let the last words those decaying lips ever uttered be carved above them with a dagger, to tell the history of a young and once promising life—useless! useless!

# LETTER V

## A SOLUTION OF THE CONSPIRACY

...The annexed Letter, which has been cavilled at, as much as copied, is a rationale of the Conspiracy, combined from the Government's own officers. When it was written it was believed to be true: the evidence at the trial has confirmed much of it: I reprint it to show how men's ingenuities were at work to account for the conception and progress of the Plot.

*Washington, May 2.*

Justice and fame are equally and simultaneously satisfied. The President is not yet in his sarcophagus, but all the conspirators against his life, with a minor exception or two, are in their prison cells waiting for the halter.

The dark and bloody plot against a good ruler's life is now so fully unraveled that I may make it plain to you. There is nothing to be gained by further waiting; the trials are proceeding; the evidence is mountain high. Within a week the national scaffold will have done its work, and be laid away forever. This prompt and necessary justice will signal the last public assassination in America. Borgia, and Medici, and Brinvilliers, have left no descendants on this side of the world.

The conspiracy was both the greatest and the smallest of our cycle. Narrowed in execution to a few, it was understood and connived at by a multitude. One man was its head and heart; its accessories were so numerous that the trouble is not whom to suspect, but whom not accuse. Damning as the result must be to the character of our race, it must be admitted, in the light of facts, that Americans are as secretive and as skillful plotters as any people in the world. The Rye House plot, never fully understood; the many schemes of Mazzini, never fastened upon him sufficiently well for implication, yield in extent, darkness and intricacy, to the republican plot against the President's life and those of his counselors. The police operations prove that the late murder as not a spasmodic and fitful crime, but long premeditated,

and carried to consummation with as much cohesion and resolution as the murder of Allessandro de Medici or Henri Quatre.

I have been accused of cannonizing Booth. Much as I denounce and deprecate his crime—holding him to be worthy of all execration, and so seeped in blood that the excuses of a century will fail to lift him out of the atmosphere of common felons—I still, at every new developement, stand farther back in surprise and terror at the wonderful resources and extraordinary influence of one whom I had learned to consider a mere Thespian, full of sound, fury, and assertion.

Strange and anomalous as the facts may seem, John Wilkes Booth was the sole projector of the plot against the President which culminated in the taking of that good man's life. He had rolled under his tongue the sweet paragraphs of Shakspeare refering to Brutus, as had his father so well, that the old man named one son Junius Brutus, and the other John Wilkes, after the wild English agitator, until it became his ambition, like the wicked Lorenzino de Medici, to stake his life upon one stroke for fame, the murder of a ruler obnoxious to the South.

That Wilkes Booth was a southern man from the first may be accounted for upon grounds, of interest as well as of sympathy. It is insidious to find no higher incentive than appreciation, but on the stage this is the first and last motive; and as Edwin Booth made his success in the North and remained steadfast, Wilkes Booth was most truly applauded in the South, and became rebel. A false emotion of gratitude, as well as an impulse of mingled waywardness and gratitude, set John Wilkes's face from the first toward the North, and he burned to make his name a part of history, cried into fame by the applauses of the South.

He hung to his bloody suggestion with dogged inflexibility, maintaining only one axiom above all the rest—that whatever minor parts might be enacted—Casca, Cassius, or what not—he was to be the dramatic Brutus, excepting that assassin's negativeness. In other words, the idea was to be his own, as well us the crowning blow.

Booth shrank at first from murder, until another and less dangerous resolution failed. This was no less than the capture of the President's body, and its detention or transportation to the South. I do not rely on this assertion upon his sealed letter, where he avows it; there has been found upon a street within the city limits, a house belonging to one Mrs. Greene; mined and furnished with underground apartments, manacles and all the accessories to private imprisonment. Here the President, and as many as could be gagged and conveyed away with him, were to be concealed in the event of failure to run them into the confederacy. Owing to his failure to group around him

as many men as he desired, Booth abandoned the project of kidnapping; but the house was discovered last week, as represented, ready to be blown up at a moment's notice.

It was at this time that Booth devised his triumphant route through the South. The dramatic element seems to have been never lacking in his design, and with all his base purposes he never failed to consider some subsequent notoriety to be enjoyed. He therefore shipped, before the end of 1864, his theatrical wardrobe from Canada to Nassau. After the commission of his crime he intended to reclaim it, and "star" through the South, drawing money as much by his crime as his abilities.

When Booth began "on his own responsibility," to hunt for accomplices, he found his theory at fault. The bold men he had dreamed of refused to join him in the rash attempt at kidnapping the President, and were too conscientious to meditate murder. All those who presented themselves were military men, unwilling to be subordinate to a civilian, and a mere play-actor, and the mortified bravo found himself therefore compelled to sink to a petty rank in the plot, or to make use of base and despicable assistants. His vanity found it easier to compound with the second alternative than the first.

Here began the first resolve, which, in its mere animal estate, we may name courage. Booth found that a tragedy in real life could no more be enacted without greasy-faced and knock-kneed supernumeraries than upon the mimic stage. Your "First Citizen," who swings a stave for Marc Antony, and drinks hard porter behind the flies is very like the bravo of real life, who murders between his cocktails at the nearest bar. Wilkes Booth had passed the ordeal of a garlicky green-room, and did not shrink from the broader and ranker green-room of real life. He assembled around him, one by one, the cut-throats at whom his soul would have revolted, except that he had become, by resolve, a cut-throat in himself.

About this time certain gentlemen in Canada began to be unenviably known. I abstain from giving their names, because unaware of how far they seconded this crime, if at all. But they seconded as infamous things, such as cowardly raids from neutral territory into the states, bank robbings, lake pirating, city burning, counterfeiting, railway sundering, and the importation of yellow fever into peaceful and unoffending communities. I make no charges against those whom I do not know, but simply say that the confederate agents, Jacob Tompson, Larry McDonald, Clement Clay, and some others, had already accomplished enough villainy to make Wilkes Booth, on the first of the present year, believe that he had but to seek an interview with them.

He visited the provinces once certainly, and three times it is believed, stopping in Montreal at St. Lawrence Hall, and banking four hundred and fifty-five dollars odd at the Ontario bank. This was his own money. I have myself

seen his bank-book with the single entry of this amount. It was found in the room of Atzerott, at Kirkwood's Hotel. From this visit, whatever encouragement Booth received, he continued in systematic correspondence with one or more of those agents down to the commission of his crime. I dare not say how far each of these agents was implicated. My personal conviction is that they were neither loth to the murder nor astonished when it had been done. They had money with discretion from the confederacy, though acting at discretion and outside of responsibility, and always, at every wild adventure, they instructed their dupes that each man took his life in his hand on every incursion into the north. So Beale took his, raiding on the great lakes. So Kennedy took his, on a midnight bonfire-tramp into the metropolis. So took the St. Albans raiders their lives in their palms, dashing into a peaceful town. And if these agents entertained Wilkes Booth's suggestion at all they plainly told him that he carried his life in his dagger's edge, and could expect from them neither aid nor exculpation.

Some one or all of these agents furnished Booth with a murderer. The fellow Wood or Payne, who stabbed Mr. Seward and was caught at Mrs. Surratt's house in Washington. He was one of three Kentucky brothers, all outlaws, and had himself, it is believed, accompanied one of his brothers, who is known to have been at St. Albans on the day of the bank-delivery. This Payne, besides being positively identified as the assassin of the Swards, had no friends nor haunts in Washington. He was simply a dispatched murderer, and after the night of the crime, struck northward of the frontier, instead of southward in the company of Booth. The proof, of this will follow in the course of the article.

While I assert that the Canadian agents knew Booth and patted his back, calling him, like Macbeth, the "prince of cut-throats," I am equally certain that Booth's project was unknown in Richmond. No word, nor written line, no clue of any sort has been found attaching Booth to the confederate authorities. The most that can be urged to meet preposterous claims of this sort is, that out of the rebellion grew the murder; which is like attributing the measles to the creation of man. But McDonald and his party had money at discretion, and under their control the vilest fellows on the continent. Their personal influence over those errant ones amounted to omnipotence. Most of the latter were young and sanguine people, like Beale and Booth; their plots were made up at St. Catharine's, Toronto, and Montreal, and they have maintained since the war began, rebel mail routes between Canada and Richmond, leading directly passed Washington.

If Booth received no positive instructions, he was at any rate adjudged a man likely to be of use, and therefore introduced to the rebel agencies in and around Washington. Doubtless by direct letter, or verbal instruction, he

received a password to the house of Mrs. Surratt.

Half applauded, half rebuffed by the rebel agents in Canada, Booth's impressions of his visit were just those which would whet him soonest for the tragedy. His vanity had been fed by the assurance that success depended upon himself alone, and that as he had the responsibility he would absorb the fame; and the method of correspondence was of that dark and mysterious shape which powerfully operated upon his dramatic temperament.

What could please an actor, and the son of an actor, better than to mingle as a principal in a real conspiracy, the aims of which were pseudo-patriotic, and the end so astounding that at its coming the whole globe would reel. Booth reasoned that the ancient world would not feel more sensitively the death of Julius Cæsar than the new the sudden taking off of Abraham Lincoln.

And so he grew into the idea of murder. It became his business thought. It was his recreation and his study. He had not worked half so hard for histrionic success as for his terrible graduation into an assassin. He had fought often on the boards, and seen men die in well-imitated horror, with flowing blood upon his keen sword's edge, and the strong stride of mimic victory with which he flourished his weapon at the closing of the curtain. He embraced conspiracy like an old diplomatist, and found in the woman and the spot subjects for emulation.

Southeast of Washington stretches a tapering peninsula, composed of four fertile counties, which at the remote tip make Point Lookout, and do not contain any town within them of more than a few hundred inhabitants. Tobacco has ruined the land of these, and slavery has ruined the people. Yet in the beginning they were of that splendid stock of Calvert and Lord Baltimore, but retain to-day only the religion of the peaceful founder. I mention it is an exceptional and remarkable fact, that every conspirator in custody is by education a Catholic. These are our most loyal citizens elsewhere, but the western shore of Maryland is a noxious and pestilential place for patriotism. The county immediately outside of the District of Columbia, to the south, is named Prince Gorgia's and the pleasantest village of this county, close to Washington, is called Surrattsville. This consists of a few cabins at a cross-road, surrounding a fine old hotel, the master whereof, giving the settlement his name, left the property to his wife, who for a long time carried it on with indifferent success. Having a son and several daughters, she moved to Washington soon after the beginning of the war and let the tavern to a trusty friend—one John Lloyd. Surrattsville has gained nothing in patronage or business from the war, except that it became at an early date, a rebel postoffice. The great secret mail from Matthias Creek, Virginia, to Port Tobacco, struck Surrattsville, and thence headed off to the east to Washington, going meanderingly north. Of this poet route Mrs. Surratt was a manageress; and John

Lloyd, when he rented her hotel, assumed the responsibility of looking out for the mail, as well the duty of making Mrs. Surratt at home when she chose to visit him.

So Surrattsville only ten miles from Washington, has been throughout the war a sect of conspiracy. It was like a suburb of Richmond, reaching quite up to the rival capital; and though the few Unionists on the peninsula knew its reputation well enough, nothing of the sort came out until the murder.

Treason never found a better agent than Mrs. Surratt. She is a large, masculine, self-possessed female, mistress of her house, and as lithe a rebel as Belle Boyd or Mrs. Greenhough. She has not the flippantry and menace of the first, nor the social power of the second; but the rebellion has found no fitter agent.

At her country tavern and Washington home Booth was made welcome, and there began the muttered murder against the nation and mankind.

The acquaintance of Mrs. Surratt in Lower Maryland undoubtedly suggested to Booth the route of escape, and made him known to his subsequent accomplices. Last fall he visited the entire region, as far as Leonardstown, in St. Mary's county, professing to be in search of land but really hunting up confederates upon whom he could depend. At this time he bought a map, a fellow to which I have seen among Atzerott's effects, published at Buffalo for the rebel government, and marking at hap-hazard all the Maryland villages, but without tracing the highroads at all. The absence of these roads, it will be seen hereafter, very nearly misled Booth during his crippled flight.

It could not but have struck Booth that this isolated part of Maryland ignorant and rebel to the brim, without telegraph or railways, or direct stage routes, belted with swamps and broken by dense timber, afforded extraordinary opportunities for shelter and escape. Only the coast survey had any adequate map of it; it was *ultima thule* to all intents, and treason might subsist in welcome upon it for a thousand years.

When Booth cast around him for assistance, he naturally selected those men whom he could control. The first that recommended himself was one Harold, a youth of inane and plastic character, carried away by the example of an actor, and full of execrable quotations, going to show that he was an imitator of the master spirit both in text and admiration. This Harold was a gunner, and therefore versed in arms; he had traversed the whole lower portion of Maryland, and was therefore a geographer as well as a tool. His friends lived at every farmhouse between Washington and Leonardsville, and he was respectably enough connected, so as to make his association creditable as well as useful.

Harold, whose picture I have seen, is a dull-faced, shallow boy, smooth-haired, and provincial; he had no money nor employment, except that he clerked for a druggist a while, until he knew Wilkes Booth, who looked at him only once, and bought his soul for a smile. Harold was infatuated by Booth as a woman by a soldier. He copied his gait and tone, adopted his opinions, and was unhappy out of his society. Booth gave him money, mysteriously obtained, and together they made the acquaintance of young John Surratt, son of the conspiratress.

Young Surratt does not appear to have been a puissant spirit in the scheme; indeed, all design and influence therein was absorbed by Mrs. Surratt and Booth. The latter was the head and heart of the plot; Mrs. Surratt was his anchor, and the rest of the boys were disciples to Iscariot and Jezebel. John Surratt, a youth of strong Southern physiognomy, beardless and lanky, knew of the murder and connived at it. "Sam" Arnold and one McLaughlin were to have been parties to it, but backed out in the end. They all relied upon Mrs. Surratt, and took their "cues" from Wilkes Booth.

The conspiracy had its own time and kept its own counsel. Murder except among the principals, was seldom mentioned except by genteel implication. But they all publicly agreed that Mr. Lincoln ought to be shot, and that the North was a race of fratricides. Much was said of Brutus, and Booth repeated heroic passages to the delight of Harold, who learned them also, and wondered if he was not born to greatness.

In this growing darkness, where all rehearsed cold-hearted murder, Wilkes Booth grew great of stature. He had found a purpose consonant with his evil nature and bad influence over weak men; so he grew moodier, more vigilant, more plausible. By mien and temperament he was born to handle a stiletto. We have no face so markedly Italian; it would stand for Caesar Borgia any day in the year. All the rest were swayed or persuaded by Booth; his schemes were three in order:

- 1st. To kidnap the President and Cabinet, and run them South or blow them up.
- 2d. Kidnapping failed, to murder the President and the rest and seek shelter in the confederate capital.
- 3d. The rebellion failed, to be its avenger, and throw the country into consternation, while he escaped by the unfrequented parts of Maryland.

When this last resolution had been made, the plot was both contracted and extended. There were made two distinct circles of confidants—those aware

of the meditated murder, and those who might shrink from murder, though willing accessories for a lesser object. Two colleagues for blood were at once accepted—Payne and Atzerott.

The former I have sketched; he is believed to have visited Washington once before, at Booth's citation; for the murder was at first fixed for the day of inauguration. Atzerott was a fellow of German descent, who had led a desperate life at Port Tobacco, where he was a house-painter. He had been a blockade-runner across the Potomac, and a mail-carrier. When Booth and Mrs. Surratt broke the design to him, with a suggestion that there was wealth in it, he embraced the offer at once, and bought a dirk and pistol. Payne also came from the North to Washington, and, as fate would have it, the President was announced to appear at Ford's theater in public. There the resolve of blood was reduced to a definite moment.

On the night before the crime Booth found on whom he could rely. John Surratt was sent northward by his mother on Thursday. Sam Arnold and McLaughlin, each of whom was to kill a cabinet officer, grew pigeon-livered and ran away. Harold true to his partiality, lingered around Booth to the end; Atzerott went so far as to take his knife and pistol to Kirkwood's, where President Johnson was stopping, and hid them under the bed. But either his courage failed, or a trifling accident deranged his plan. But Payne, a professional murderer, stood "game," and fought his way over prostrate figures to his sick victim's bed. There was great confusion and terror among the tacit and rash conspirators on Thursday night. They had looked upon the plot as of a melodrama, and found to their horror that John Wilkes Booth meant to do murder.

Six weeks before the murder, young John Surratt had taken two splendid repeating carbines to Surrattville and told John Lloyd to secret them.

The latter made a hole in the wainscotting and suspended them from strings, so that they fell within the plastered wall of the room below. On the very afternoon of the murder, Mrs. Surratt was driven to Surrattsville, and she told John Lloyd to have the carbines ready because they would be called for that night. Harold was made quartermaster, and hired the horses. He and Atzerott were mounted between 8 o'clock and the time of the murder, and riding about the streets together.

The whole party was prepared for a long ride, as their spurs and gauntlets show. It may have been their design to ride in company to the Lower Potomac, and by their numbers exact subsistence and transportation; but all edifices of murder lack a corner stone. We only know that Booth ate and talked well during the day; that he never seemed so deeply involved in 'oil,' and that there is a hiatus between his supper here and his appearance at Ford's theater.

Lloyd, I may interpolate, ordered his wife a few days before the murder to go on a visit to Allen's Fresh. She says she does not know why she was so sent away, but swears that it is so. Harold, three weeks before the murder, visited Port Tobacco, and said that the next time the boys heard of him he would be in Spain; he added that with Spain there was no extradition treaty. He said at Surrattsville that he meant to make a barrel of money, or his neck would stretch.

Atzerott said that if he ever came to Port Tobacco again he would be rich enough to buy the whole place.

Wilkes Booth told a friend to go to Ford's on Friday night and see the best acting in the world.

At Ford's theater, on Friday night, there were many standers in the neighborhood of the door, and along the dress circle in the direction of the private box where the President sat.

The play went on pleasantly, though Mr. Wilkes Booth an observer of the audience, visited the stage and took note of the positions. His alleged associate, the stage carpenter, then received quiet orders to clear the passage by the wings from the prompter's post to the stage door. All this time, Mr. Lincoln, in his family circle, unconscious of the death that crowded fast upon him, watched the pleasantries and smiled and felt heartful of gentleness.

Suddenly there was a murmur near the audience door, as of a man speaking above his bound. He said:

"Nine o'clock and forty-five minutes!"

These words were reiterated from mouth to mouth until they passed the theater door, and were heard upon the sidewalk.

Directly a voice cried, in the same slightly-raised monotone:

"Nine o'clock and fifty minutes!"

This also passed from man to man, until it touched the street like a shudder.

"Nine o'clock and fifty-five minutes!" said the same relentless voice, after the next interval, each of which narrowed to a lesser span the life of the good President.

Ten o'clock here sounded, and conspiring echo said in reverberation:

"Ten o'clock!"

So like a creeping thing, from lip to lip, went:

"Ten o'clock and five minutes."

(An interval.)

"Ten o'clock and ten minutes!"

At this instant Wilkes Booth appeared in the door of the theater, and the men who had repeated the time so faithfully and so ominously scattered at his coming, as at some warning phantom. Fifteen minutes afterwards the telegraph wires were cut.

All this is so dramatic that I fear to excite a laugh when I write it. But it is true and proven, and I do not say it but report it.

All evil deeds go wrong. While the click of the pistol, taking the President's life, went like a pang through the theater, Payne was spilling blood in Mr. Seward's house from threshold to sick chamber. But Booth's broken leg delayed him or made him lose his general calmness and he and Harold left Payne no to his fate.

I have not adverted to the hole bored with a gimlet in the entry door of Mr. Lincoln's box, and cut out with a penknife. The theory that the pistol-ball of Booth passed through this hole is exploded. And the stage carpenter may have to answer for this little orifice with all his neck. For when Booth leaped from the box he strode straight across the stage by the footlights, reaching the prompter's post, which is immediately behind that private box opposite Mr. Lincoln. From this box to the stage door in the rear, the passage-way leads behind the ends of the scenes, and if generally either closest up by one or more withdrawn scenes, or so narrow that only by doubling and turning sidewise can one pass along. On this fearful night, however, the scenes were so adjusted to the murderer's design that he had a free aisle from the foot of the stage to the exit door.

Within fifteen minutes after the murder the wires were severed entirely around the city, excepting only a secret wire for government uses, which leads to Old Point. I am told that by this wire the government reached the fortifications around Washington, first telegraphing all the way to Old Point, and then back to the outlying forts. This information comes to me from so many creditable channels that I must concede it.

Payne, having, as he thought, made an end of Mr. Seward—which would have been the case but for Robinson, the nurse-mounted his horse, and attempted to find Booth. But the town was in alarm, and he galloped at once for the open country, taking as he imagined, the proper road for the East Branch. He rode at a killing pace, and when near Fort Lincoln, on the Baltimore pike, his horse threw him headlong. Afoot and bewildered, he resolved to return to the city, whose lights he could plainly see; but before doing so he concealed himself some time, and made some almost absurd efforts to disguise himself. Cutting a cross section from the woolen undershirt which covered his muscular arm, he made a rude cap of it, and threw away his bloody coat. This has since been found in the woods, and blood has been found also

on his bosom and sleeves. He also spattered himself plentifully with mud and clay, and, taking an abandoned pick from the deserted intrenchments near by, he struck at once for Washington.

By the providence which always attends murder, he reached Mrs. Surratt's door just as the officers of the government were arresting her. They seized Payne at once, who had an awkward lie to urge in his defense—that he had come there to dig a trench. That night he dug a trench deep and broad enough for both of them to lie in forever. They washed his hands, and found them soft and womanish; his pockets contained tooth and nail brushes and a delicate pocket knife. All this apparel consorted ill with his assumed character. He is, without doubt, Mr. Seward's attempted murderer.

Coarse, and hard, and calm, Mrs. Surratt shut up her house after the murder, and waited with her daughters till the officers came. She was imperterbable, and rebuked her girls for weeping, and would have gone to jail like a statue, but that in her extremity, Payne knocked at her door. He had come, he said, to dig a ditch for Mrs. Surratt, whom he very well knew. But Mrs. Surratt protested that she had ever seen the man at all, and had no ditch to clean.

"How fortunate, girls," she said, "that these officers are here; this man might have murdered us all."

Her effrontery stamps her as worthy of companionship with Booth. Payne has been identified by a lodger of Mrs. Surratt's, as having twice visited the house under the name of Wood. The girls will render valuable testimony in the trial. If John Surratt were in custody the links would be complete.

Atzerott had a room almost directly over Vice-President Johnson's. He had all the materials to do murder, but lost spirit or opportunity. He ran away so hastily that all his arms and baggage were discovered; a tremendous bowie-knife and a Colt's cavalry revolver were found between the mattresses of his bed. Booth's coat was also found there, showing conspired flight in company, and in it three boxes of cartridges, a map of Maryland, gauntlet for riding, a spur and a handkerchief marked with the name of Booth's mother—a mother's souvenir for a murderer's pocket!

Atzerott fled alone, and was found at the house of his uncle in Montgomery county. I do not know that any instrument of murder has ever made me thrill as when I drew this terrible bowie-knife from its sheath. Major O'Bierne, of New-York, was the instigator of Atzerott's discovery and arrest.

I come now to the ride out of the city by the chief assassin and his dupe. Harold met Booth immediately after the crime in the next street, and they rode at a gallop past the Patent Office and over Capitol Hill.

As they crossed the Eastern branch at Uniontown, Booth gave his proper name to the officer at the bridge. This, which would seem to have been foolish, was, in reality, very shrewd. The officers believed that one of Booth's accomplices had given this name in order to put them out of the real Booth's track. So they made efforts elsewhere, and so Booth got a start. At midnight, precisely, the two horsemen stopped at Surrattsville, Booth remaining on his nag while Harold descended and knocked lustily at the door. Lloyd, the landlord, came down at once, when Harold pushed past him into the bar, and obtained a bottle of whiskey, some of which he gave to Booth immediately. While Booth was drinking, Harold went up stairs and brought down one of the carbines. Lloyd started to get the other, but Harold said:

"We don't want it; Booth has broken his leg and can't carry it."

So the second carbine remained in the hall, where the officers afterward found it.

As the two horsemen started to go off, Booth cried out to Lloyd:

"Do you want to hear some news?"

"I don't care much about it," cried Lloyd, by his own account.

"We have murdered," said Booth, "the President and Secretary of State!"

And with this horrible confession, Booth and Harold dashed away in the midnight, across Prince George's county.

On Saturday, before sunrise, Booth and Harold, who had ridden all night without stopping elsewhere, reached the house of Dr. Mudd, three miles from Bryantown. They contracted with him for twenty-five dollars in greenbacks to set the broken leg. Harold, who knew Dr. Mudd, introduced Booth under another name, and stated that he had fallen from his horse during the night. The doctor remarked of Booth that he draped the lower part of his face while the leg was being set; he was silent, and in pain. Having no splits in the house, they split up an old-fashioned wooden band-box and prepared them. The doctor was assisted by an Englishman, who at the same time began to hew out a pair of crutches. The inferior bone of the left leg was broken vertically across, and because vertically it did not yield when the crippled man walked upon it.

The riding boot of Booth had to be cut from his foot; within were the words "J. Wilkes." The doctor says he did not notice these, but that visual defect may cost him his neck. The two men waited around the house all day, but toward evening they slipped their horses from the stable and rode away in the direction of Allen's Fresh.

Below Bryantown run certain deep and slimy swamps, along the belt of these Booth and Harold picked up a negro named Swan, who volunteered to

show them the road for two dollars; they gave him five more to show them the route to Allen's Fresh, but really wished, as their actions intimated, to gain the house of one Sam. Coxe, a notorious rebel, and probably well advised of the plot. They reached the house at midnight. It is a fine dwelling, one of the best in Maryland. And after hallooing for some time, Coxe came down to the door himself. As soon as he opened it and beheld who the strangers were, he instantly blew out a candle he held in his hand, and without a word pulled them into the house, the negro remaining in the yard. The confederates remained in Coxe's house till 4 A. M., during which time, the negro saw them drink and eat heartily; but when they reappeared they spoke in a loud tone, so that Swan could hear them, against the hospitality of Coxe. All this was meant to influence the darkey; but their motives were as apparent as their words. He conducted them three miles further on, when they told him that now they knew the way, and giving him five dollars more—making twelve in all—told him to go back.

But when the negro, in the dusk of the morning, looked after them as he receded, he saw that both horses' heads were turned once more toward Coxe's, and it was this man, doubtless, who harbored the fugitives from Sunday to Thursday, aided, possibly, by such neighbors as the Wilsons and Adamses.

At the point where Booth crossed the Potomac the shores are very shallow, and one must wade out some distance to where a boat will float. A white man came up here with a canoe on Friday, and tied it by a stone anchor. Between seven and eight o'clock it disappeared, and in the afternoon some men at work in Virginia, saw Booth and Harold land, tie the boat's rope to a stone, and fling it ashore, and strike at once across a ploughed field for King George Court House. Many folks entertained them without doubt, but we positively hear of them next at Port Royal Ferry, and then at Garrett's farm.

I close this article with a list of all who were at Garrett's farm on the death of Booth.

1. *E. J. Conger, Detectives.*
2. *Lieut. Baker,*
3. *Surgeon from Port Royal,*
4. *Four Garrett daughters.*
5. *Harold, Booth's accomplice,*

Soldiers.—

*Company H, Sixteenth New-York Volunteer Cavalry,*  
*Lieutenant Ed. P. Doherty commanding:*

*Corporals A. Neugarten, J. Waly, M. Hornsby: Privates J. Mellington, D. Darker, E. Parelays, W. Mockgart; Corporals—Zimmer (Co.*

*C), M. Taenaek; Privates H. Pardman, J. Meiyers, W. Burnn, F. Meekdank, G. Haich, J. Raien, J. Kelly, J. Samger (Co. M), G. Zeichton,-Steinbury, L. Sweech (Co. A), A. Sweech (Co. H), F. Diacts; Sergeant Wandell; Corporals Lannekey, Winacky; Sergeant Corbett (Co. L).*

Sergeant Corbett, who shot Booth, was the only man of the command belonging to the same company with Lieutenant Doherty, Commandant.

# LETTER VI

## THE DETECTIVES' STORIES

*Washington, May 2—P. M.*

The police resources of the country have been fairly tested during the past two weeks. Under the circumstances, the shrewdness and energy of both municipal and national detectives have been proven good. The latter body has had a too partial share of the applause thus far, while the great efforts of our New-York and other officers have been overlooked. In the crowning success of Doherty, Conger, and Baker on the Virginia side of the water we have forgotten the as vigorous and better sustained pursuit on the Maryland side.

Yet the Secretary of War has thanked all concerned, especially referring to many excellent leaders in the long hunt through Charles and St. Mary's counties. Here the military and civil forces together amounted to quite a small army, and constituted by far the largest police organization ever known on this side of the Atlantic.

I think the adventures and expedients of these public servants worthy of a column. It would be out of all proportion to pass them by when we devote a dozen lines to every petty larceny and shoplifting.

On the Friday night of the murder the departments were absolutely paralyzed. The murderers had three good hours for escape; they had evaded the pursuit of lightning by snapping the telegraph wires, and rumor filled the town with so many reports that the first valuable hours, which should have been used to follow hard after them, were consumed in feverish efforts to know the real extent of the assassination.

Immediately afterwards, however, or on Saturday morning early, the provost and special police force got on the scent, and military in squads were dispatched close upon their heels.

Three grand pursuits were organized: one reaching up the north bank of the Potomac toward Chain bridge, to prevent escape by that direction into Virginia, where Mosby, it was suspected, waited to hail the murderers;

A second starting from Richmond, Va., northward, forming a broad advancing picket or skirmish line between the Blue Ridge and the broad sea-running streams;

A third to scour the peninsula towards Point Lookout.

The latter region became the only one well examined; the northern expedition failed until advised from below to capture Atzerott, and failed, to capture Payne. Yet there were cogent probabilities that the assassin had taken this route; for Mosby would have given them the right hand of fellowship.

When that guerrilla heard of Booth's feat, said Captain Jett, he exclaimed:

"Now, by—! I could take that man in my arms."

Washington, as a precautionary measure, was doubly picketed at once; the authorities in all northern towns advised of the personnel of the murderer, and requests made of the detective chiefs in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New-York, to forward to Washington without delay their best decoys.

A court of inquiry was organized on the moment, and early in the week succeeding rewards were offered. An individual, and not the government, offered the first rewards.

There were two men without whom the hunt would have gone astray many times.

John S. Young, chief of the New-York detective force, a powerful and resolute man, whose great weight and strength are matched by boundless energy, and both subordinate to a head as clear as the keen and searching warrant of his eye. This man has been in familiar converse with every rebel agent in the Canadas, and is feared by them as they fear the fates of Beall and Kennedy. Without being a sensationist, he has probably rendered the cleverest services of the war to the general government. They sent for him immediately after the tragedy, and he stopped on the way for his old police companion, Marshal Murray. The latter's face and figure are familiar to all who know New-York; he resembles an admiral on his quarter-deck; he is a detective of fair and excellent repute, and has a somewhat novel pride in what he calls "the most beautiful gallows in the United States."

These officials were ordered to visit Colonel Ingraham's office and examine the little evidence on hand. They and their tried officers formed a junction on Sunday afternoon with the large detective force of Provost-Marshal Major O'Bierne. The latter commands the District of Columbia civil and military police. He is a New-Yorker and has been shot through the body in the field.

The detective force of Young and Murray consisted of Officers Radford, Kelso, Elder, and Hoey, of New-York; Deputy-Marshal Newcome, formerly of THE WORLD'S city staff; Officers Joseph Pierson and West, of Baltimore.

Major O'Bierne's immediate aids were Detectives John Lee, Lloyd, Gavigan, Coddington, and Williams.

A detachment of the Philadelphia detective police, force—Officers Taggart, George Smith, and Carlin, reporting to Colonel Baker—went in the direction of the North Pole; everybody is on the *que vive* for them.

To the provost-marshal of Baltimore, MacPhail, who knew the tone and bearing of the country throughout, was joined the zealous co-operation of Officer Lloyd, of Major O'Bierne's staff, who had a personal feeling against the secessionists of lower Maryland; they had once driven him away for his loyalty, and had reserved their hospitality for assassins.

Lieutenant Commander Gushing, I am informed, also rendered important services to the government in connection with the police operations. Volunteer detectives, such as Ex-Marshal Lewis and Angelis, were plentiful; it is probable that in the pitch of the excitement five hundred detective officers were in and around Washington city. At the same time the secret police of Richmond abandoned their ordinary business, and devoted themselves solely to this overshadowing offense.

No citizen, in these terrible days, knows what eyes were upon him as he talked and walked, nor how his stature and guise were keenly scanned by folks who passed him absent-faced, yet with his mental portrait carefully turned over, the while some invisible hand clutched a revolver, and held a life or death challenge upon his lips.

The military forces were commanded by Colonel Welles, of the Twenty sixth Michigan regiment, whose activity and zeal were amply sustained by Colonel Clendenning, of the Eighth Illinois cavalry, probably the finest body of horse in the service.

The first party to take the South Maryland road was dispatched by Major O'Bierne, and commanded by Lieutenant Lovett, of the Veteran Reserves. It consisted of twenty-five cavalry men, with detectives Cottingham, Lloyd, and Gavigan; these latter, with the lieutenant, kept well in advance. They made inquiries of a soothing and cautious character, but saw nothing suspicious until they arrived at Piscataway, where an unknown man, some distance ahead, observed them, and took to the woods. This was on Sunday night, forty hours after the murder.

Guided by Officer Lloyd, the little band dashed on, arriving at Bryantown on Tuesday. Here they arrested John Lloyd, of the hotel at Surrattsville, of

whom they had previously inquired for the murderers, and he had said positively that he neither knew them nor had seen anybody whatever on the night of the crime. He was returning in a wagon, with his wife, whom he had ordered, the day before, to go on a visit to Allen's Fresh, The Monday afterward he started to bring her back. This woman, frightened at the arrest, acknowledged at once that in her husband's conduct there was some inexplicable mystery. He was taciturn and defiant as before, until confronted by some of his old Union neighbors.

The few Unionists of Prince George's and Charles counties, long persecuted and intimidated, now came forward and gave important testimony.

Among these was one Roby, a very fat and very zealous old gentleman, whose professions were as ample as his perspiration. He told the officers of the secret meetings for conspiracy's sake at Lloyd's Hotel, and although a very John Gilpin on horseback, rode here and there to his great loss of wind and repose, fastening fire-coals upon the guilty or suspected.

Lloyd was turned over to Mr. Cottingham, who had established a jail at Robytown; that night his house was searched, and Booth's carbine found hidden in the wall. Three days afterward, Lloyd himself confessed—and his neck is quite nervous at this writing.

This little party, under the untiring Lovett, examined all the farm-houses below Washington resorting to many shrewd expedients, and taking note of the great swamps to the east of Port Tobacco; they reached Newport at last and fastened tacit guilt upon many residents.

Beyond Bryantown they overhauled the residence of Doctor Mudd and found Booth's boot. This was before Lloyd confessed, and was the first positive trace the officers had that they were really close upon the assassins.

I do not recall anything more wild and startling than this vague and dangerous exploration of a dimly known, hostile, and ignorant country. To these few detectives we owe much of the subsequent successful prosecution of the pursuit. They were the Hebrew spies.

By this time the country was filling up with soldiers, but previously a second memorable detective party went out under the personal command of Major O'Bierne. It consisted, besides that officer, of Lee, D'Angellia, Callahan, Hoey, Bostwick, Hanover, Bevins, and McHenry, and embarked at Washington on a steam-tug for Chappell's Point. Here a military station had long been established for the prevention of blockade and mail-running across the Potomao. It was commanded by Lieutenant Laverty, and garrisoned by sixty-five men. On Tuesday night, Major O'Bierne's party reached this place, and soon afterwards, a telegraph station was established here by an invaluable man to the expedition, Captain Beckwith, General Grant's chief cypher

operator, who tapped the Point Lookout wire, and placed the War Department within a moment's reach of the theater of events.

Major O'Bierne's party started at once over the worst road in the world for Port Tobacco.

If any place in the world is utterly given over to depravity, it is Port Tobacco. From this town, by a sinuous creek, there is flat boat navigation to the Potomac, and across that river to Mattox's creek. Before the war Port Tobacco was the seat of a tobacco aristocracy and a haunt of negro traders. It passed very naturally into a rebel post for blockade-runners and a rebel post-office general. Gambling, corner fighting, and shooting matches were its lyceum education. Violence and ignorance had every suffrage in the town. Its people were smugglers, to all intents, and there was neither Bible nor geography to the whole region adjacent. Assassination was never very unpopular at Port Tobacco, and when its victim was a northern president it became quite heroic. A month before the murder a provost-marshal near by was slain in his bed-chamber. For such a town and district the detective police were the only effective missionaries. The hotel here is called the Brawner House; it has a bar in the nethermost cellar, and its patrons, carousing in that imperfect light, look like the denizens of some burglar's crib, talking robbery between their cups; its dining-room is dark and tumble-down, and the *cuisine* bears traces of Caffir origin; a barbecue is nothing to a dinner there. The Court House of Port Tobacco is the most superflous house in the place, except the church. It stands in the center of the town in a square, and the dwellings lie about it closely, as if to throttle justice. Five hundred people exist in Port Tobacco; life there reminds me, in connection with the slimy river and the adjacent swamps, of the great reptile period of the world, when iguanadons and pterodactyls and pleosauri ate each other.

Into this abstract of Gomorrah the few detectives went like angels who visited Lot. They pretended to be enquiring for friends, or to have business designs, and the first people they heard of were Harold and Atzerott. The latter had visited Port Tobacco three weeks before the murder, and intimated at that time his design of fleeing the country. But everybody denied having seen him subsequent to the crime.

Atzerott had been in town just prior to the crime. He had been living with a widow woman named Mrs. Wheeler, by whom he had several children, and she was immediately called upon by Major O'Bierne. He did not tell her what Atzerott had done, but vaguely hinted that he had committed some terrible crime, and that since he had done her wrong, she could vindicate both herself and justice by telling his whereabouts. The woman admitted that Atzerott had been her bane, but she loved him, and refused to betray him.

His trunk was found in her garret, and in it the key to his paint shop in Port Tobacco. The latter was fruitlessly searched, but the probable whereabouts of Atzerott in Montgomery county obtained, and Major O'Bierne telegraphing there immediately, the desperate fellow was found and locked up. A man named Crangle who had succeeded Atzerott in Mrs. Wheeler's pliable affections, was arrested at once and put in jail. A number of disloyal people were indicated or "spotted" as in no wise angry at the President's taking off, and for all such a provost prison was established.

*Illustration: Maryland.*

A few miles from Port Tobacco dwelt a solitary woman, who, when questioned, said that for many nights she had heard, after she had retired to bed, a man enter her cellar and lie there all night, departing before dawn. Major O'Bierne and the detectives ordered her to place a lamp in her window the next night she heard him enter, and at dark they established a cordon of armed officers around the place. At midnight punctually she exhibited the light, when the officers broke into the house and thoroughly searched it, without result. Yet the woman positively asserted that she had heard the man enter.

It was afterward found that she was of diseased mind.

By this time the military had come up in considerable numbers, and Major O'Bierne was enabled to confer with Major Wait, of the Eighth Illinois.

The major had pushed on Monday night to Leonardstown, and pretty well overhauled that locality.

It was at this time that preparations were made to hunt the swamps around Chapmantown, Beantown, and Allen's Fresh. Booth had been entirely lost since his departure from Mudd's house, and it was believed that he had either pushed on for the Potomac or taken to the swamps. The officers sagaciously determined to follow him to the one and to explore the other.

The swamps tributary to the various branches of the Wicomico river, of which the chief feeder is Allen's creek, bear various names, such as Jordan's swamp, Atchall's swamp, and Scrub swamp. There are dense growths of dogwood, gum, and beech, planted in sluices of water and bog; and their width varies from a half mile to four miles, while their length is upwards of sixteen miles. Frequent deep ponds dot this wilderness place, with here and there a stretch of dry soil, but no human being inhabits the malarious extent; even a hunted murderer would shrink from hiding there. Serpents and slimy lizards are the only denizens; sometimes the coon takes refuge in this desert from the hounds, and in the soil mud a thousand odorous muskrats delve,

with now and then a tremorous otter. But not even the hunted negro dares to fathom the treacherous clay, nor make himself a fellow of the slimy reptiles which reign absolute in this terrible solitude. Here the soldiers prepared to seek for the President's assassin, and no search of the kind has ever been so thorough and patient. The Shawnee, in his strong hold of despair in the heart of Okeefeueokee, would scarcely have changed homes with Wilkes Booth and David Harold, hiding in this inhuman country.

The military forces deputed to pursue the fugitives were seven hundred men of the Eighth Illinois cavalry, six hundred men of the Twenty-second Colored troops, and one hundred men of the Sixteenth New York. These swept the swamps by detachments, the mass of them dismounted, with cavalry at the belts of clearing, interspersed with detectives at frequent intervals in the rear. They first formed a strong picket cordon entirely around the swamps, and then, drawn up in two orders of battle, advanced boldly into the bogs by two lines of march. One party swept the swamps longitudinally, the other pushed straight across their smallest diameter.

A similar march has not been made during the war; the soldiers were only a few paces apart, and in steady order they took the ground as it came, now plunging to their arm-pits in foul sluices of gangrened water, now hopelessly submerged in slime, now attacked by Regions of wood ticks, now tempting some unfaithful log or greenishly solid morass, and plunging to the tip of the skull in poison stagnation; the tree boughs rent their uniforms; they came out upon dry land, many of them without a rag of garment scratched, and gashed, and spent, repugnant to themselves, and disgusting to those who saw them; but not one trace of Booth or Harold was any where found. Wherever they might be, the swamps did not contain them.

While all this was going on, a force started from Point Lookout, and swept the narrow necks of Saint Mary's quite up to Medley's Neck. To complete the search in this part of the country, Colonel Wells and Major O'Bierne started with a force of cavalry and infantry for Chappel Point; they took the entire peninsula as before, and marched in close skirmish line across it, but without finding anything of note. The matter of inclosing a house was by cavalry advances, which held all the avenues till mounted detectives came up. Many strange and ludicrous adventures occurred on each of these expeditions. While the forces were going up Cobb's neck, there was a counter force coming down from Allen's Fresh.

Major O'Bierne started for Leonardstown with his detective force, and played off Laverty as Booth, and Hoey as Harold. These two advanced to farm-houses and gave their assumed names, asking at the same time for assistance and shelter. They were generally avoided, except by one man named Claggert, who told them they might hide in the woods behind his house.

When Claggert was arrested, however he stated that he meant to hide them only to give them up. While on this adventure, a man who had heard of the reward came very near shooting Laverty. The ruse now became hazardous and the detectives resumed their real characters.

I have not time to go into the detail of this long and excellent hunt. My letter of yesterday described how the detectives of Mr. Young and Marshal Murray examined the negro Swan, and traced Booth to the house of Sam Coxe, the richest rebel in Charles county. There is a gap in the evidence between the arrival of Booth at this place and his crossing the Potomac above Swan Point, in a stolen or purposely-provided canoe. But as Coxe's house is only ten miles from the river, it is possible that he made the passage of the intermediate country undiscovered.

One Mills, a rebel mail-carrier, also arrested, saw Booth and Harold lurking along the river bank on Friday; he referred Major O'Bierne to one Claggert, a rebel, as having seen them also; but Claggert held his tongue, and went to jail. On Saturday night, Major O'Bierne, thus assured, also crossed the Potomac with his detectives to Boon's farm, where the fugitives had landed. While collecting information here a gunboat swung up the stream, and threatened to fire on the party.

It was now night, and all the party worn to the ground with long travel and want of sleep. Lieutenant Laverty's men went a short distance down the country and gave up, but Major O'Bierne, with a single man, pushed all night to King George's court-house, and next day, Sunday, re-embarked for Chappell's Point. Hence he telegraphed his information, and asked permission to pursue, promising to catch the assassins before they reached Port Royal.

This the department refused. Colonel Baker's men were delegated to make the pursuit with the able Lieutenant Doherty, and. O'Bierne, who was the most active and successful spirit in the chase, returned to Washington, cheerful and contented.

At Mrs. Burratt's Washington house, at the Pennsylvania Hotel, Washington, and at Surrattsville, the Booth plot was almost entirely arranged. These three places will be relics of conspiracy forever.

Harold said to Lieutenant Doherty, after the latter had dragged him from the barn.

"Who's that man in there? It can't be Booth; he told me his name was Loyd."

He further said that he had begged food for Booth from house to house while the latter hid in the woods.

The confederate captain, Willie Jett, who had given Booth a lift behind his saddle from Port Royal to Garrett's farm, was then courting a Miss Goldmann at Bowling Green; his traveling companions were Lieutenants Ruggles and Burbridge.

Payne, the assassin of the Swards, was arrested by Officers, Sampson, of the sub-treasury, and Devoe, acting under General Alcott. The latter had besides, Officers Marsh and Clancy (a stenographer).

The reward for the capture of Booth will be distributed between very many men. The negro, Swan, will get as much of it, as he deserves. It amounts to about eighty thousand dollars, but the War Department may increase it at discretion. The entire rewards amount to a hundred and sixty odd thousand. Major O'Bierne should get a large part of it as well.

This story which I must close abruptly, deserves to be re-written, with all its accessory endeavours. What I have said is in skeleton merely, and far from exhaustive.

# LETTER VII

## THE MARTYR

*Washington, May 14.*

I am sitting in the President's office. He was here very lately, but he will not return to dispossess me of this high-backed chair he filled so long, nor resume his daily work at the table where I am writing.

There are here only Major Hay and the friend who accompanies me. A bright-faced boy runs in and out, darkly attired, so that his fob-chain of gold is the only relief to his mourning garb. This is little Tad., the pet of the White House. That great death, with which the world rings, has made upon him only the light impression which all things make upon childhood. He will live to be a man pointed out everywhere, for his father's sake; and as folks look at him, the tableau of the murder will seem to encircle him.

The room is long and high, and so thickly hung with maps that the color of the wall cannot be discerned. The President's table at which I am seated, adjoins a window at the farthest corner; and to the left of my chair as I recline in it, there is a large table before an empty grate, around which there are many chairs, where the cabinet used to assemble. The carpet is trodden thin, and the brilliance of its dyes is lost. The furniture is of the formal cabinet class, stately and semi-comfortable; there are book cases sprinkled with the sparse library of a country lawyer, but lately plethoric, like the thin body which has departed in its coffin. They are taking away Mr. Lincoln's private effects, to deposit them wheresoever his family may abide, and the emptiness of the place, on this sunny Sunday, revives that feeling of desolation from which the land has scarce recovered. I rise from my seat and examine the maps; they are from the coast survey and engineer departments, and exhibit all the contested grounds of the war: there are pencil lines upon them where some one has traced the route of armies, and planned the strategic circumferences of campaigns. Was it the dead President who so followed the march of empire, and dotted the sites of shock and overthrow?

Here is the Manassas country—here the long reach of the wasted Shenandoah; here the wavy line of the James and the sinuous peninsula. The wide campagna of the gulf country sways in the Potomac breeze that filters in at the window, and the Mississippi climbs up the wall, with blotches of blue and red to show where blood gushed at the bursting of deadly bombs. So, in the half-gloomy, half-grand apartment, roamed the tall and wrinkled figure whom the country had summoned from his plain home into mighty history, with the geography of the republic drawn into a narrow compass so that he might lay his great brown hand upon it everywhere. And walking to and fro, to and fro, to measure the destinies of arms, he often stopped, with his thoughtful eyes upon the carpet, to ask if his life were real and if he were the arbiter of so tremendous issues, or whether it was not all a fever-dream, snatched from his sofa in the routine office of the Prairie state.

There is but one picture on the marble mantel over the cold grate—John Bright, a photograph.

I can well imagine how the mind of Mr. Lincoln often went afar to the face of Bright, who said so kindly things of him when Europe was mocking his homely guise and provincial phraseology. To Mr. Lincoln, John Bright was the standard-bearer of America and democracy in the old world. He thrilled over Bright's bold denunciations of peer and "Privilege," and stretched his long arm across the Atlantic to take that daring Quaker innovator by the hand.

I see some books on the table; perhaps they have lain there undisturbed since the reader's dimming eyes grew nerveless. A parliamentary manual, a Thesaurus, and two books of humor, "Orpheus C. Kerr," and "Artemus Ward." These last were read by Mr. Lincoln in the pauses of his hard day's labor. Their tenure here bears out the popular verdict of his partiality for a good joke; and, through the window, from the seat of Mr. Lincoln, I see across the grassy grounds of the capitol, the broken shaft of the Washington Monument, the long bridge and the fort-tipped Heights of Arlington, reaching down to the shining river side. These scenes he looked at often to catch some freshness of leaf and water, and often raised the sash to let the world rush in where only the nation abided, and hence on that awful night, he departed early, to forget this room and its close applications in the *abandon* of the theater.

I wonder if that were the least of Booth's crimes—to slay this public servant in the stolen hour of recreation he enjoyed but seldom. We worked his life out here, and killed him when he asked a holiday.

Outside of this room there is an office, where his secretaries sat—a room more narrow but as long—and opposite this adjacent office, a second door,

directly behind Mr. Lincoln's chair leads by a private passage to his family quarters. This passage is his only monument in the building; he added nor subtracted nothing else; it tells a long story of duns and loiterers, contract-hunters and seekers for commissions, garrulous parents on paltry errands, toadies without measure and talkers without conscience. They pressed upon him through the great door opposite his window, and hat in hand, come courtying to his chair, with an obsequious "Mr. President!"

If he dared, though the chief magistrate and commander of the army and navy, to go out of the great door, these vampires leaped upon him with their Babylonian pleas, and barred his walk to his hearthside. He could not insult them since it was not in his nature, and perhaps many of them had really urgent errands. So he called up the carpenter and ordered a strategic route cut from his office to his hearth, and perhaps told of it after with much merriment.

Here should be written the biography of his official life—in the room where have concentrated all the wires of action, and where have proceeded the resolves which vitalized in historic deeds. But only the great measures, however carried out, were conceived in this office. The little ones proceeded from other places..

Here once came Mr. Stanton, saying in his hard and positive way:

"Mr. Lincoln, I have found it expedient to disgrace and arrest General Stone."

"Stanton," said Mr. Lincoln, with an emotion of pain, "when you considered it necessary to imprison General Stone, I am glad you did not consult me about it."

And for lack of such consultation, General Stone, I learn, now lies a maniac in the asylum. The groundless pretext, upon which he suffered the reputation of treason, issued from the Department of War—not from this office.

But as to his biography, it is to be written by Colonel Nicolay and Major Hay. They are to go to Paris together, one as attache of legation, the other as consul, and while there, will undertake the labor. They are the only men who know his life well enough to exhaust it, having followed his official tasks as closely as they shared his social hours.

Major Hay is a gentleman of literary force. Colonel Nicolay has a fine judgment of character and public measures. Together they should satisfy both curiosity and history.

As I hear from my acquaintances here these episodes of the President's life, I recall many reminiscences of his ride from Springfield to Harrisburg, over much of which I passed. Then he left home and became an inhabitant

of history. His face was solid and healthy, his step young, his speech and manner bold and kindly. I saw him at Trenton stand in the Legislature, and say, in his conversational intonation:

“We may have to put the foot down firm.”

How should we have hung upon his accents then had we anticipated his virtues and his fate.

Death is requisite to make opinion grave. We looked upon Mr. Lincoln then as an amusing sensation, and there was much guffaw as he was regarded by the populace; he had not passed out of partisan ownership.

Little by little, afterward, he won esteem, and often admiration, until the measure of his life was full, and the victories he had achieved made the world applaud him. Yet, at this date, the President was sadly changed. Four years of perplexity and devotion had wrinkled his face, and stooped his shoulders, and the failing eyes that glared upon the play closed as his mission was completed, and the world had been educated enough to comprehend him.

The White House has been more of a Republican mansion under his control than for many administrations. Uncouth guests came to it often, typical of the simple western civilization of which he was a graduate, and while no coarse altercation has ever ensued, the portal has swung wide for five years.

A friend, connected with a Washington newspaper, told me that he had occasion to see Mr. Lincoln one evening, and found that the latter had gone to bed. But he was told to sit down in the office, and directly the President entered. He wore only a night shirt, and his long, lank hirsute limbs, as he sat down, inclined the guest to laughter. Mr. Lincoln disposed of his request at once, and manifested a desire to talk. So he reached for the cane which my friend carried and conversed in this manner:

“I always used a cane when I was a boy. It was a freak of mine. My favorite one was a knotted beech stick, and I carved the head myself. There’s a mighty amount of character in sticks. Don’t you think so? You have seen these fishing poles that fit into a cane? Well, that was an old idea of mine. Dogwood clubs were favorite ones with the boys. I ‘spose they use ‘em yet. Hickory is too heavy, unless you get it from a young sapling. Have you ever noticed how a stick in one’s hand will change his appearance? Old women and witches would’nt look so without sticks. Meg Merrilies understands that.”

In this way my friend, who is a clerk, in a newspaper office, heard the President talk for an hour. The undress of the man and the witness of his subject would be staples for merriment if we did not reflect that his greatness was of no conventional cast, that the playfulness of his nature and the simplicity of his illustration lightened public business but never arrested it.

Another gentleman, whom I know, visited the President in high dudgeon one night. He was a newspaper proprietor and one of his editors had been arrested.

"Mr. Lincoln," he said, "I have been off electioneering for your re-election, and in my absence you have had my editor arrested. I won't stand it, sir. I have fought better administrations than yours."

"Why, John," said the President, "I don't know much about it. I suppose your boys have been too enterprising. The fact is, I don't interfere with the press much, but I suppose I am responsible."

"I want you to order the man's release to-night," said the applicant. "I shan't leave here till I get it. In fact, I am the man who should be arrested. Why don't you send me to Capitol Hill?"

This idea pleased the President exceedingly. He laughed the other into good humor.

"In fact," he said, "I am under restraint here, and glad of any pretext to release a journalist."

So he wrote the order, and the writer got his liberty.

It must not be inferred from this, however, that the President was a devotee to literature. He had no professional enthusiasm for it. The literary coterie of the White House got little flattery but its members were treated as agreeable citizens and not as the architects of any body's fortune.

Willis went there much for awhile, but yielded to his old habit of gossiping about the hall paper and the teapots. Emerson went there once, and was deferred to us if he were anything but a philosopher. Yet he so far grasped the character of his host as to indite that noble humanitarian eulogy upon him, delivered at Concord, and printed in the *WORLD*. It will not do to say definitely in this notice how several occasional writers visited the White House, heard the President's views and assented to them and afterward abused him. But these attained no remembrance nor tart reproach from that least retaliatory of men. He harbored no malice, and is said to have often placed himself on the stand-point of Davis and Lee, and accounted for their defection while he could not excuse it.

He was a good reader, and took all the leading *NEW YORK* dailies every day. His secretaries perused them and selected all the items which would interest the President; these were read to him and considered. He bought few new books, but seemed ever alive to works of comic value; the vein of humor in him was not boisterous in its manifestations, but touched the geniality of his nature, and he reproduced all that he absorbed, to elucidate some new issue, or turn away argument by a laugh.

As a jester, Mr. Lincoln's tendency was caricatured by the prints, but not exaggerated. He probably told as many stories as are attributed to him. Nor did he, as is averred, indulge in these jests on solemn occasions. No man felt with such personal intensity the extent of the casualties of his time, and he often gravely reasoned whether he could be in any way responsible for the bloodshed and devastation over which it was his duty to preside.

An acquaintance of mine—a private—once went to him to plead for a man's life. He had never seen the man for whom he pleaded, and had no acquaintance with the man's family. Mr. Lincoln was touched by his disinterestedness, and said to him:

"If I were anything but the President, I would be constantly working as you have done."

Whenever a doubt of one's guilt lay on his mind, the man was spared by his direct interference..

There was an entire absence in the President's character of the heroic element. He would do a great deed in *deshabille* as promptly as in full dress. He never aimed to be brilliant, unconsciously understanding that a great man's brilliancy is to be measured by the "wholeness" and synthetic cast of his career rather than by any fitful ebullitions. For that reason we look in vain through his messages for "points." His point was not to turn a sentence or an epigram, but to win an effect, regardless of the route to it.

He was commonplace in his talk, and Chesterfield would have had no patience with him; his dignity of character lay in his uprightness rather than in his formal manner. Members of his government often reviewed him plainly in his presence. Yet he divined the true course, while they only argued it out.

His good feeling was not only personal, but national. He had no prejudice against any race or potentate. And his democracy was of a practical, rather than of a demonstrative, nature. He was not Marat, but Moreau—not Paine and Jefferson; but Franklin.

His domestic life was like a parlor of night-time, lit by the equal grate of his genial and uniform kindness. Young Thaddy played with him upon the carpet; Robert came home from the war and talked to his father as to a school-mate, he was to Mrs. Lincoln as chivalrous on the last day of his life as when he courted her. I have somewhere seen a picture of Henry IV. of France, riding his babies on his back: that was the President.

So dwelt the citizen who is gone—a model in character if not in ceremony, for good men to come who will take his place in the same White House, and find their generation comparing them to the man thought worthy of assassination. I am glad to sit here in his chair, where he has bent so often,—in the atmosphere of the household he purified, in the sight of the green

grass and the blue river he hallowed by gazing upon, in the very centre of the nation he preserved for the people, and close the list of bloody deeds, of desperate fights of swift expiations, of renowned obsequies of which I have written, by inditing at his table the goodness of his life and the eternity of his memory.

# LETTER VIII

## THE TRIAL

*Washington, May 26.*

The most exciting trial of our times has obtained a very meager commemoration in all but its literal features. The evidence adduced in the course of it, has been too faithfully reported, through its far-fetched and monotonous irregularities, but nobody realizes the extraordinary scene from which so many columns emanate, either by aid of the reporters' scanty descriptions, or by the purblind sketches of the artists.

Now that the evidence is growing vapid, and the obstinacy of the military commission has lost its coarse zest, we may find enough readers to warrant a fuller sketch of the conspirators' prison.

About a mile below Washington, where the high Potomac Bluffs meet the marshy border of the Eastern branch, stands the United States arsenal, a series of long, mathematically uninteresting brick buildings, with a broad lawn behind them, open to the water, and level military plazas, on which are piled pyramids of shell and ball, among acres of cannon and cannon-carriages, and caissons. A high wall, reaching circularly around these buildings, shows above it, as one looks from Washington, the barred windows of an older and more gloomy structure than the rest, which forms the city front of the group of which it is the principal. This was a penitentiary, but, long ago added to the arsenal, it has been re-transformed to a court-room and jail, and in its third, or uppermost story, the Military Commission is sitting.

The main road to the arsenal is by a wide and vacant avenue, which abuts against a gate where automaton sentries walk, but the same gate can best be reached on foot by the shores of the Potomac, in the sight, of the forts, the shipping, and Alexandria.

The scene at the arsenal in time of peace is common-place enough, except that across the Eastern Branch the towers of the lunatic asylum, perched

upon a height, look down baronially; but this trial of murderers has made the spot a fair.

A whole company of volunteers keeps the gate, through which are passing cabs, barouches, officers' ambulances, and a stream of folks on foot; while farther along almost a regiment crosses the drive, their huddled shelter tents extending entirely across the peninsula. These are playing cards on the ground, and tossing quoits, and sleeping on their faces, while a gunboat watches the river front, and under a circular wall a line of patrols, ten yards apart, go to and fro perpetually.

It is 10 o'clock, and the court is soon to sit. Its members ride down in superb ambulances and bring their friends along to show them the majesty of justice. A perfect park of carriages stands by the door to the left, and from these dismount major-generals' wives, in rustling silks; daughters of congressmen, attired like the lilies of the milliner; little girls who hope to be young ladies and have come with "Pa," to look at the assassins; even brides are here, in the fresh blush of their nuptials, and they consider the late spectacle of the review as good as lost, if the court-scene be not added to it. These tender creatures have a weakness for the ring of manacles, the sight of folks to be suspended in the air, the face of a woman confederate in blood.

They chat with their polite guides, many of whom are gallant captains, and go one after another up the little flight of steps which leads to the room of the officer of the day.

He passes them, if he pleases, up the crooked stairways, and when they have climbed three of these, they enter a sort of garret-room, oblong, and plastered white, and about as large as an ordinary town-house parlor.

Four doors open into it—that by which we have entered, two from the left, where the witnesses wait, and one at the end, near the left far corner, which is the outlet from the cells.

A railing, close up to the stairway door, gives a little space in the foreground for witnesses; two tables, transverse to this rail, are for the commission and the press, the first-named being to the right; between these are a raised platform and pivot arm-chair for the witness; below are the sworn phonographers and the counsel for the accused, and then another rail like that separating the crowd from the court, holds behind it the accused and their guards.

These are they who are living not by years nor by weeks, but by breaths. They are motley enough, for the most part, sitting upon a long bench with their backs against the wall,—ill-shaved, haggard, anxious, and the dungeon door at their left opens now and then to show behind it a moving bayonet.

There are women within the court proper, edging upon the reporters, introduced there by a fussy usher, and through four windows filters the imperfect daylight, making all things distinguishable, yet shadowy. The *coup d'oeil* of this small and crowded scene is lively as a popular funeral.

There is the witness with raised hand, pointing toward heaven, and looking at Judge Holt. The gilt stars, bars, and orange-colored sashes of the commission; the women's brilliant silks and bonnets; the crowding spectators, with their brains in their eyes; the blue coats of the guards; the working scribes; and last of all the line of culprits, whose suspected guilt has made them worthy of all illustration.

Between the angle of the wall and the studded door, under the heavy bar of dressed stone which marks above the thickness of the gaol, sits all alone a woman's figure, clothed in solemn black. Her shadowy skirt hides her feet, so that we cannot see whether they are riveted; her sleeves of sable sweep down to her wrist, and dark gloves cover the plumpness of her hand, while a palm-leaf fan nods to and fro to assist the obscurity of her veil of crape, descending from her widow's bonnet.

A solitary woman, beginning the line of coarse indicted men, shrinking beneath the scornful eyes of her sex, and the as bold survey of men more pitiful, may well excite, despite her guilt, a moment of sympathy.

Let men remember that she is the mother of a son who has fled to save his forfeit life by deserting her to shame, and perhaps, to death. Let women, who will not mention her in mercy, learn from her end, in all succeeding wars, to make patriotism of their household duties and not incite to blood.

Mrs. Surratt is a graduate of that seminary which spits in soldiers faces, denounces brave generals upon the rostrum, and cries out for an interminable scaffold when all the bells are ringing peace.

How far her wicked love influenced her to participation in the murder rests in her own breast, and up to this time she has not differed from mothers at large—to twist her own bow-string rather than build his gibbet.

Beneath her shadowy bonnet, over her fan-tip, we see two large, sad eyes, rising and falling, and now and then when the fan sways to and fro, the hair just turning gray with trouble, and the round face growing wan and seamed with terrible reflection, are seen a moment crouching low, as if she would wish to grovel upon the floor and bury her forehead in her hands.

Yet, sometimes, across Mrs. Surratt's face a stealthiness creeps—a sort of furtive, feline flashing of the eye, like that of one which means to leap sideways. At these times her face seems to grow hard and colorless, as if that tiger expression which Pradier caught upon the face of Brinvilliers and fastened into a masque, had been repeated here. Not to grow mawkish while

we must be kind, let us not forget that this woman is an old plotter. If she did not devise the assassination, she was privy to it long. She was an agent of contraband mails—a bold, crafty, assured rebel—perhaps a spy—and in the event of her condemnation, let those who would plead for her spend half their pity upon that victim whose heart was like a woman's, and whose hand was merciful as a mother's.

Before the door sits an officer, uncovered, who does not seem to labor under any particular fear, chiefly because the captives are ironed to immobility, and he stares and smiles alternately, as if he were somewhat amiable and extremely bored.

Next to the officer is a shabby-looking boy, whose seat is by the right jamb of the jail door. Of all boys just old enough to feel their oats, this boy is the most commonplace. His parents would be likely to have no sanguine hopes of his reaching the presidency; for his head indicates latent dementia, and a slice or two from it would recommend him, without exanimation, to the school for the feeble-minded. Better dressed, and washed, and shaved, he might make a tolerable adornment to a hotel door, or even reach the dignity of a bar-keeper or an usher at a theatre. But that this fellow should occupy a leaf in history and be confounded with a tragedy entering into the literature of the world, reverses manifest destiny, and leaves neither phrenology nor physiognomy a place to stand upon.

Come up! Gall, Spurzheim, and Lavater, and remark his sallow face, attenuated by base excesses! Do you know any forehead so broad which means so little? the oyster could teach this man philosophy! His chin is sharp, his eyes are blank blue, his short black hair curls over his ears, and his beard is of a prickly black, with a moustache which does not help his general contemptibleness. A dirty grayish shirt without a linen collar, is seen between the lapels of the greasy and dusty cloth coat, sloping at the shoulders; and under his worn brown trowsers, the manacle of iron makes an ugly garter to his carpet clipper.

This is David Harold, who shared the wild night-ride of Booth, and barely escaped that outlaw's death in the burning barn.

He stoops to the rail of the dock, now and then, to chat with his attorney, and a sort of blank anxiety which he wears, as his head turns here and there, shifts to a frolicking smile. But a woman of unusual attractions enters the court, and Harold is much more interested in her than in his acquittal.

Great Caesar's dust, which stopped a knot-hole, has in this play boy an inverse parallel. He was at best hostler to a murderer, and failed in that. His chief concern at present is to have somebody to talk to; and he thinks upon the whole, that if an assassination is productive of so little fun, he will have nothing to do with another one.

That Harold has slipped into history gives us as much surprise as that he has yet to suffer death gives us almost contempt for the scaffold. But if the scaffold must wait for only wise men to get upon it, it must rot. Your wise man does no murder in the first place, and if so, in the second, he dodges the penalty. In this world, Harold, idiotcy is oftener punished than guilt.

That Booth should have used Harold is very naturally accounted for. Actors live only to be admired; vanity rises to its climax in them. Booth preferred this sparrow to sing him peans rather than live by an eagle and be screamed at now and then.

At the right hand side of Harold sits a soldier in blue, who is evidently thinking about a game of quoits with his comrades in the jail yard; he wonders why lawyers are so very dry, and is surprised to find a trial for murder as tedious as a thanksgiving sermon.

But on the soldier's other hand is a figure which makes the center and cynosure of this thrilling scene. Taller by a whole head than either his companions or the sentries, Payne, the assassin, sits erect, and flings his barbarian eye to and fro, radiating the tremendous energy of his colossal physique.

He is the only man worthy to have murdered Mr. Seward. When against the delicate organization, the fine, subtle, nervous mind of the Secretary of State, this giant, knife in hand, precipitated himself, two forms of civilization met as distinctly as when the savage Gauls invaded the Roman senate.

Lawlessness and intelligence, the savage and the statesman, body and mind, fought together upon Mr. Seward's bed.

The mystery attending Payne's home and parentage still exists to make him more incomprehensible. Out of the vague, dim *ultima thule*, like those Asiatic hordes which came from nowhere and shivered civilization, Payne suddenly appeared and fought his way to the *sanctum sanctorum* of law. I think his part in the assassination more remarkable than Booth's, The latter's crime was shrewdly plotted, as by one measuring intelligence with the whole government. But Payne did not think—he only struck!

With this man's face before me as I write, I am reminded of some Maori chief waging war from the lust of blood or the pride of local dominion. His complexion is bloodless, yet so healthy that a passing observer would afterward speak of it as ruddy. His face is broad, with a character nose, sensual lips, and very high cheek bones; the cranium is full and the brow speaking, while the head runs back to an abnormal apex at the tip of the cerebellum. His straight, lusterless black hair, duly parted, is at the summit so disturbed that tufts of it rise up like Red Jacket's or Tecumseh's; but the head is kept well up, and rests upon a wonderfully broad throat, muscular as one's thigh, and without any trace, as he sits, of the protuberance called Adam's apple.

Withal, the eye is the man Payne's power. It is dark and speechless, and rolls here and there like that of a beast in a cage which strives in vain to understand the language of its captors. It seems to say, if anything, that, it has no sympathy with anybody approximate, and has submitted, like a lion bound, to the logic of conviction and of chains.

Payne looks at none of his fellow-prisoners: assassins caught seldom cares to recognise each other; for while there is faithfulness among thieves, there is none among murderers. His great white eyeball never roves to anybody's in the dock, nor theirs to his. He has confessed his crime and they know it; so they have no mutual hope; they listen to the evidence because it concerns them; he looks at it only, because it cannot save him. He is entirely beardless, yet in his boyish chin more of a man physically than the rest, combined.

While I watch this man I am constantly repeating to myself that stanza of Bryant's:

*"Upon the market place he stood,—  
A man of giant frame,  
Amid the gathering multitude  
That shrank to hear his name;  
All proud of step and firm of limb,  
His dark eye on the ground—  
And silently they gazed on him,  
As on a lion bound."*

His dress, which we scarcely notice in the grander contrast of his pose and stature, is an old shirt of woolen blue, with a white nap at the button-holes, and upon his knees of black cloth he twirls, as if for relaxation, between his powerful manacles, a soiled white handkerchief—if from his mother, we conjecture, a gift to a bloodhound from his dam. His heavy handcuffs make his broad shoulders more narrow. Yet we can see by the outline of the sleeves what girth the muscles has, and the hand at the end of his long and bony arm is wide and huge, as if it could wield a claymore as well as a dirk. He also wears carpet slippers, but his ankles are clogged with so heavy irons that two men must carry them when he enters or leaves the dock. For this man there can be no sentiment—no more than for a bull. The flesh on his face is hard, as if cast, rather than generated, and while we see how he towers above the entire court, we watch him in wonder, as if he were some maniac denizen of a zone where men without minds grow to the stature and power of fiends.

The face of Payne is not of the traditional southern peculiarities. He resembles rather a Pennsylvania mountaineer than a Kentucky rustic.

Three weeks ago I gave, in an account of the conspiracy which many gain-sayed, but which the trial has fully confirmed, a sketch of this man, to which I still adhere. He was furnished to Booth and John Surratt from Canada; sent upon special service with his life in his hands; and he faced the murder he was to commit like any prize-fighter. I pity Beall, who died intelligently for a wretched essay against civilians, that his biography and fate must be matched by this savage's!

Next to Payne, and crouching under him like a frog under a rock, is an inconsiderable soldier, who chews his cud, and would cheerfully hang his protege for the sake of being rid of him. My sympathies are entirely enlisted for this soldier; he has neither the joy of being acquitted, nor the excitement of being tried. He is quite a sizable man by himself, but Payne overhangs him, and the dullness of the trial quite stultifies him. The few points of law which are admitted here are not so evident to this soldier as the point of his bayonet. I see what ails him.

He wants to swear.

A beam running overhead divides the court lengthwise in half, and as the prisoners sit at the end of the court, the German Atzerott, or Adzerota, has a place just beneath the beam. This is very ominous for Atzerott. The filthiness of this man denies him sympathy. He is a disgusting little groveler of dry, sandy hair, oval head, ears set so close to the chin that one would think his sense of hearing limited to his jaws, and a complexion so yellow that the uncropped brownness of his beard does not materially darken it. He wears a grayish coat, low grimy shirt, and the usual carpet slippers of threadbare red over his shifting and shiftless feet. His head is bent forward, and seems to be anxiously trying to catch the tenor of the trial. Many persons outside of the court, Atzerott, are equally puzzled!

From as much examination of this man as his insignificance permits, I should call him a "gabby" fellow—loud of resolution, ignoble of effort. Over his lager no man would be braver. His face is familiar to me from a review of those detective cabinets usually called "Rogues' Galleries." As a "sneak thief" or "bagman," I should convict him by his face; the same indictment would make me acquit him instantly of assassination. In this estimate I rely upon evidence as well as upon appearance. Atzerott swaggered about Kirkwood's Hotel asking for the Vice-President's room; Payne or Booth would have done the murder silently. Nobody pities a dirty man. The same arts of dress and cleanliness which please ladies influence juries.

Next to Atzerott sits a soldier—a very jolly and smooth faced soldier—who at one time hears a witness say something laughable. The soldier immediately grins to the farthest point of his scalp. But he is chagrined to find that the

joke is too trivial to admit of a laugh of duration. Very few jokes before the present court do so. But this soldier being of long charity and excellent patience, awaits the next joke like a veteran under orders, and reposes his chin upon the dock as if aware that between jokes there was ample time for a nap.

The next prisoner to the right is O'Laughlin. He is a small man, about twenty-eight years of age, attired in a fine, soiled coat, but without white linen upon either his bosom or neck, and handcuffs rest hugely upon his mediocrity. His moustache, eye-brows, and hair are regular and very black. He does not look unlike Booth, though he seems to have little bodily power, and he is very anxious, as if more earnest than any of the rest, to have a fair lease upon life. His countenance is not prepossessing, though he might be considered passably good looking in a mixed company.

Between O'Laughlin and the next prisoner, Spangler, sits a soldier in ultramarine—a discontented soldier, a moody, dissatisfied, and arbitrary soldier. His definition of military justice is like the boy's answer at school to the familiar question upon the Constitution of the United States:

“What rights do accused persons enjoy?”

The boy wrote out, very carefully, this answer:

“Death by hanging.”

The boy would have been correct had the question applied to accused persons before a court-martial.

Spangler, the scene-shifter and stage-carpenter, has the face and bearing of a day-laborer. His blue woollen shirt does not confuse him, as he is used to it. He has an oldish face, wrinkled by fearful anticipations, and his hair is thin. He is awkwardly built, and watches the trial earnestly, as if striving to catch between the links of evidence vistas of a life insured. This man has a simple and pleading face, and there is something genial in his great, incoherent countenance. He is said to have cleared the stage for Booth's escape, but this is indifferently testified to. He had often been asked by Booth to take a drink at the nearest bar. Persons who drink assure me that the greatest mark of confidence which a great man can show a lesser one is to make that tender; this, therefore, explains Booth's power over Spangler.

Spangler is the first scene-shifter who may become a *dramatis personæ*.

A soldier sits between Spangler and Doctor Mudd. The soldier would like Spangler to get up and go away, so that he could have as much of the bench as he might sleep upon. This particular soldier, I may be qualified to say, would sleep upon his post.

Doctor Mudd has a New England and not a Maryland face. He compares, to those on his left, as Hyperion to a squatter. His high, oval head is bald very far up, but not benevolently so, and it is covered with light red hair, so thin as to contrast indifferently with the denseness of his beard and goatee. His nose would be insignificant but for its sharpness, and at the nostrils it is swelling and high-spirited. His eyes impinge upon his brows, and they are shining and rather dark, while the brows themselves are so scantily clothed with hair that they seem quite naked. Mudd is neatly dressed in a green-grass duster, and white bosom and collar; if he had no other advantages over his associates these last would give it to him. He keeps his feet upon the rail before him in true republican style, and rolls a morsel of tobacco under his tongue.

The military commission works as if it were delegated not to try, but to convict, and Dr. Mudd, if he be innocent, is in only less danger than if he were guilty. He has a sort of home-bred intelligence in his face, and socially is as far above his fellows as Goliath of Gath above the rest of the Philistines.

On the right of Doctor Mudd sits a soldier, who is striving to look through his legs at the judge-advocate, as if taking a sort of secret aim at that person, with the intent to fetch him down, because he makes the trial so very dry, and the soldier so very thirsty.

The last man, who sits on the extreme right of the prisoners, is Mr. Sam. Arnold. He is, perhaps, the best looking of the prisoners, and the least implicated. He has a solid, pleasant face; has been a rebel soldier, foolishly committed himself to Booth, with perhaps no intention to do a crime, recanted in pen and ink, and was made a national character. Had he recanted by word of mouth he might have saved himself unpleasant dreams. This shows everybody the absurdity of writing what they can so easily say. The best thing Arnold ever wrote was his letter to Booth refusing to engage in murder. Yet this recantation is more in evidence against than then his original purpose.

Arnold looks out of the window, and feels easy.

The reporters who are present are generally young fellows, practical and ardent, like Woods, of Boston; Colburn, of *THE WORLD*; and Major Poore, who has been the chronicler of such scenes for twenty years. Ber. Pitman, one of the authors of phonetic writing, is among the official reporters, and the Murphies, who could report the lightning, if it could talk, are slashing down history as it passes in at their ears and runs out at their fingers' ends.

The counsel for the accused strike me as being commonplace lawyers. They either have no chance or no pluck to assert the dignity of their profession. Reverdy Johnson is not here. The first day disgusted him, as he is a practitioner of *law*. Yet the best word of the trial has been his:

"I, gentlemen, am a member of that body of legislators which creates courts-martial and major-generals!"

The commission has collectively an imposing appearance: the face of Judge Holt is swarthy; he questions with slow utterance, holding the witness in his cold, measuring eye. Hunter, who sits at the opposite end of the table, shuts his eyes now and then, either to sleep or think, or both, and the other generals take a note or two, and watch for occasions to distinguish themselves.

Excepting Judge Holt, the court has shown as little ability as could be expected from soldiers, placed in unenviable publicity, and upon a duty for which they are disqualified, both by education and acumen. Witness the lack of dignity in Hunter, who opened the court by a coarse allusion to "humbug chivalry;" of Lew. Wallace, whose heat and intolerance were appropriately urged in the most exceptional English; of Howe, whose tirade against the rebel General Johnson was feeble as it was ungenerous! This court was needed to show us at least the petty tyranny of martial law and the pettiness of martial jurists. The counsel for the defence have just enough show to make the unfairness of the trial partake of hypocrisy, and the wideness of the subjects discussed makes one imagine that the object of the commission is to write a cyclopedia, and not to hang or acquit six or eight miserable wretches.

# LETTER IX

## THE EXECUTIONS

*Washington, Friday, July 7th.*

The trial is over; four of the conspirators have paid with their lives the penalty of the Great Conspiracy; the rest go to the jail, and with one exception for the remainder of their lives.

Whatever our individual theories may be, the great crime is ended, and this is the crowning scene:

It was a long and dusty avenue, along which rambled soldiers in bluish white coats, cattle with their tongues out, straying from the herd, and a few negroes making for their cabins, which dotted the fiery and vacant lots of the suburbs. At the foot of this avenue, where a lukewarm river holds between its dividing arms a dreary edifice of brick, the way was filled with collected cabs, and elbowing people, abutting against a circle of sentinels who kept the arsenal gate. The low, flat, dust-white fields to the far left were also lined with patrols and soldiers lying on the ground in squads beside their stacked muskets. Within these a second blue and monotonous line extended. The drive from the arsenal gate to the arsenal's high and steel-spiked wall was beset by companies of exacting sabremen, and all the river bank to the right was edged with blue and bayonets. This exhibition of war was the prelude to a very ghastly but very popular episode—an execution. Three men and a woman were to be led out in shackles and hung to a beam. They had conspired to take life; they had thrilled the world with the partial consummation of their plot; they were to reach the last eminence of assassins, on this parched and oppressive noon, by swinging in pinioned arms and muffled faces in the presence of a thousand people.

The bayonets at the gate were lifted as I produced my pass. It was the last permission granted. In giving it away the General seemed relieved, for he had been sorely troubled by applications. Everybody who had visited

Washington to seek for an office, sought to see this expiation also. The officer at the gate looked at my pass suspiciously. "I don't believe that all these papers have been genuine," he said. Is an execution, then, so great a warning to evil-doers, that men will commit forgery to see it?

I entered a large grassy yard, surrounded by an exceedingly high wall. On the top of this wall, soldiers with muskets in their hands, were thickly planted. The yard below was broken by irregular buildings of brick. I climbed by a flight of rickety outside stairs to the central building, where many officers were seated at the windows, and looked awhile at the strange scene on the grassy plaza. On the left, the long, barred, impregnable penitentiary rose. The shady spots beneath it were occupied by huddling spectators. Soldiers were filling their canteens at the pump. A face or two looked out from the barred jail. There were many umbrellas hoisted on the ground to shelter civilians beneath them. Squads of officers and citizens lay along the narrow shadow of the walls. The north side of the yard was enclosed on three sides by columns of soldiers drawn up in regular order, the side next to the penitentiary being short to admit of ingress to the prisoner's door; but the opposite column reached entirely up to the north wall.

Within this enclosed area a structure to be inhabited by neither the living nor the dead was fast approaching completion. It stood gaunt, lofty, long. Saws and hammers made dolorous music on it. Men, in their shirt sleeves, were measuring it and directing its construction in a business way. Now and then some one would ascend its airy stair to test its firmness; others crawled beneath to wedge its slim supports, or carry away the falling debris.

Toward this skeleton edifice all looked with a strange nervousness. It was the thought and speculation of the gravest and the gayest.

It was the gallows.

A beam reached, horizontally, in the air, twenty feet from the ground; four awkward ropes, at irregular intervals, dangled from it, each noosed at the end. It was upheld by three props, one in the center and one at each end. These props came all the way to the ground where they were morticed in heavy bars. Midway of them a floor was laid, twenty by twelve feet, held in its position on the farther side by shorter props, of which there were many, and reached by fifteen creaking steps, railed on either side. But this floor had no supports on the side nearest the eye, except two temporary rods, at the foot of which two inclined beams pointed menacingly, held in poise by ropes from the gallows floor.

And this floor was presently discovered to be a cheat, a trap, a pitfall.

Two hinges only held it to its firmer half. These were to give way at the fatal moment, and leave only the shallow and unreliable air for the bound

and smothering to tread upon.

The traps were two, sustained by two different props.

The nooses were on each side of the central support.

Was this all?

Not all.

Close by the foot of the gallows four wooden boxes were piled upon each other at the edge of four newly excavated pits, the fresh earth of which was already dried and brittle in the burning noon.

Here were to be interred the broken carcasses when the gallows had let go its throttle. They were so placed as the victims should emerge from the gaol door they would be seen near the stair directly in the line of march.

And not far from these, in silence and darkness beneath the prison where they had lain so long and so forbodingly, the body of John Wilkes Booth, sealed up in the brick floor, had long been mouldering. If the dead can hear he had listened many a time to the rattle of their manacles upon the stairs, to the drowsy hum of the trial and the buzz of the garrulous spectators; to the moaning, or the gibing, or the praying in the bolted cells where those whom kindred fate had given a little lease upon life lay waiting for the terrible pronouncement.

It was a long waiting, and the roof of a high house outside the walls was seen to be densely packed with people. Others kept arriving moment by moment; soldiers were wondering when the swinging would begin and officers arguing that the four folks "deserved it, damn them!" Gentlemen of experience were telling over the number of such expiations they had witnessed. Analytic people were comparing the various modes of shooting, garroting, and guillotining. Cigars were sending up spirals of soothing smoke. There was a good deal of covert fear that a reprieve might be granted. Inquires were many and ingenuous for whisky, and one or two were so deeply expectant that they fell asleep.

How much those four dying, hoping, cringing, dreaming felons were grudged their little gasp of life! It was to be a scene, not a postponement or a prolongation. "Who was to be the executioner?" "Why had not the renowned and artistic Isaacs been sent for from New York?" "Would they probably die game, or grow weak-kneed in the last extremity?" Ah, the gallows' workmen have completed the job! "Now then we should have it."

Still there was delay. The sun peeped into the new-made graves and made blistering hot the gallows' floor. The old pump made its familiar music to the cool plash of blessed water. The grass withered in the fervid heat. The bronzed faces of the soldiers ran lumps of sweat. The file upon the jail walls

looked down into the wide yard yawningly. No wind fluttered the two battle standards condemned to unfold their trophies upon this coming profanation. Not yet arrived. Why? The extent of grace has almost been attained. The sentence gave them only till two o'clock! Why are they so dilatory in wishing to be hanged?

Suddenly the wicket opens, the troops spring to their feet, and stand at order arms, the flags go up, the low order passes from company to company; the spectators huddle a little nearer to the scaffold; all the writers for the press produce their pencils and note-books.

First came a woman pinioned.

A middle-aged woman, dressed in black, bonnetted and veiled, walking between two bare-headed priests.

One of these held against his breast a crucifix of jet, and in the folds of his blue-fringed sash he carried an open breviary, while both of them muttered the service for the dead.

Four soldiers with musket at shoulder, followed, and a captain led the way to the gallows.

The second party escorted a small and shambling German, whose head had a long white cap upon it, rendering more filthy his dull complexion, and upon whose feet the chains clanked as he slowly advanced, preceded by two officers, flanked by a Lutheran clergyman, and followed, as his predecessor, by an armed squad.

The third, preacher and party, clustered about a shabby boy, whose limbs tottered as he progressed.

The fourth, walked in the shadow of a straight high stature, whose tawny hair and large blue eye were suggestive rather of the barbarian striding in his conqueror's triumph, than the assassin going to the gallows.

All these, captives, priests, guards, and officers, nearly twenty in all, climbed slowly and solemnly the narrow steps; and upon four arm chairs, stretching across the stage in the rear of the traps, the condemned were seated with their spiritual attendants behind them.

The findings and warrants were immediately read to the prisoners by General Hartrauft in a quiet and respectful tone, an aid holding an umbrella over him meantime. These having been already published, and being besides very uninteresting to any body but the prisoners, were paid little heed to, all the spectators interesting themselves in the prisoners.

There was a fortuitous delicacy in this distribution, the woman being placed farthest from the social and physical dirtiness of Atzerott, and nearest the unblanched and manly physiognomy of Payne.

She was not so pale that the clearness of her complexion could not be seen, and the brightness of the sun made her veil quite transparent. Her eyes were seen to be of a soft gray; her brown hair lay smoothly upon a full, square forehead; the contour of her face was comely, but her teeth had the imperfectness of those of most southern women, being few and irregular. Until the lips were opened she did not reveal them. Her figure was not quite full enough to be denominated buxom, yet had all the promise of venerable old age, had nature been permitted its due course. She was of the medium height, and modest—as what woman would not be under such searching survey? At first she was very feeble, and leaned her head upon alternate sides of her arm-chair in nervous spasms; but now and then, when a sort of wail just issued from her lips, the priest placed before her the crucifix to lull her fearful spirit. All the while the good fathers Wigett and Walter murmured their low, tender cadences, and now and then the woman's face lost its deadly fear, and took a bold, cognizable survey of the spectators. She wore a robe of dark woolen, no collar, and common shoes of black listing. Her general expression was that of acute suffering, vanishing at times as if by the conjuration of her pride, and again returning in a paroxysm as she looked at the dreadful rope dangling before her. This woman, to whom, the priests have made their industrious moan, holding up the effigy of Christ when their own appeals became of no avail, perched there in the lofty air, counting her breaths, counting the winks of light, counting the final wrestles of her breaking heart, had been the belle of her section, and many good men had courted her hand. She had led a pleasant life, and children had been born to her—who shared her mediocre ambition and the invincibility of her will. If the charge of her guilt were proven, she was the Lady Macbeth of the west.

But women know nothing of consequences. She alone of all her sex stands now in this thrilled and ghastly perspective, and in immediate association with three creatures in whose company it is no fame to die: a little crying boy, a greasy unkempt sniveller, and a confessed desperado. Her base and fugitive son, to know the infamy of his cowardice and die of his shame, should have seen his mother writhing in her seat upon the throne his wickedness established for her.

Payne, the strangest criminal in our history, was alone dignified and self possessed. He wore a closely-fitting knit shirt, a sailor's straw hat tied with a ribbon, and dark pantaloons, but no shoes. His collar, cut very low, showed the tremendous muscularity of his neck, and the breadth of his breast was more conspicuous by the manner in which the pinioned arms thrust it forward. His height, his vigor, his glare made him the strong central figure of this interelementary tableaux. He said no word; his eyes were red as with the penitential weeping of a courageous man, and the smooth hardness of

his skin seemed like a polished muscle. He did not look abroad inquisitively, nor within intuitively. He had no accusation, no despair, no dreaminess. He was only looking at death as for one long expected, and not a tremor nor a shock stirred his long stately limbs; withal, his blue eye was milder than when I saw him last, as if some bitterness, or stolidness, or obstinate pride had been exorcised, perhaps by the candor of confession. Now and then he looked half-pityingly at the woman, and only once moved his lips, as if in supplication. Few who looked at him, forgetful of his crime, did not respect him. He seemed to feel that no man was more than his peer, and one of his last commands was a word of regret to Mr. Seward.

I have a doubt that this man is entirely a member of our nervous race. I believe that a fiber of the aboriginal runs through his tough sinews. At times he looked entirely an Indian. His hair is tufted, and will not lie smoothly. His cheek-bones are large and high set. There is a tint in his complexion. Perhaps the Seminole blood of his swampy state left a trace of its combative nature there.

Payne was a preacher's son, and not the worst graduate of his class. His real name is Lewis Thornton Powell.

He died without taking the hand of any living friend.

Even the squalid Atzerott was not so poor. I felt a pity for his physical rather than his vital or spiritual peril. It seemed a profanation to break the iron column of his neck, and give to the worm his belted chest.

But I remember that he would have slain a sick old man.

The third condemned, although whimpering, had far more grit than I anticipated; he was inquisitive and flippant-faced, and looked at the noose flaunting before him, and the people gathered below, and the haggard face of Atzerott, as if entirely conscious and incapable of abstraction.

Harold would have enjoyed this execution vastly as a spectator. He was, I think, capable of a greater degree of depravity than any of his accomplices. Atzerott might have made a sneak thief, Booth a forger, but Harold was not far from a professional pickpocket. He was keen-eyed, insolent, idle, and, by a small experience in Houston street, would have been qualified for a first-class "knuck." He had not, like the rest, any political suggestion for the murder of the heads of the nation; and upon the gallows, in his dirty felt hat, soiled cloth coat, light pantaloons and stockings, he seemed unworthy of his manacles.

A very fussy Dutchman tied him up and fanned him, and he wept forgetfully, but did not make a halt or absurd spectacle.

Atzerott was my ideal of a man to be hung—a dilution of Wallack's rendering of the last hours of Fagan, the Jew; a sort of sick man, quite garrulous and

smitten, with his head thrown forward, muttering to the air, and a pallidness transparent through his dirt as he jabbered prayers and pleas confusedly, and looked in a complaining sort of way at the noose, as if not quite certain that it might not have designs upon him.

He wore a greyish coat, black vest, light pantaloons and slippers, and a white affair on his head, perhaps a handkerchief.

His spiritual adviser stood behind him, evidently disgusted with him.

Atzerott lost his life through too much gabbling. He could have had serious designs upon nothing greater than a chicken, but talked assassination with the silent and absolute Booth, until entrapped into conspiracy and the gallows, much against his calculation. This man was visited by his mother and a poor, ignorant woman with whom he cohabited. He was the picture of despair, and died ridiculously, whistling up his courage.

These were the dramatis personæ, no more to be sketched, no more to be cross-examined, no more to be shackled, soon to be cold in their coffins.

They were, altogether, a motley and miserable set. Ravallae might have looked well swinging in chains; Charlotte Corday is said to have died like an actress; Beale hung not without dignity, but these people, aspiring to overturn a nation, bore the appearance of a troop of ignorant folks, expiating the blood-shed of a brawl.

When General Hartrauft ceased reading there was momentary lull, broken only by the cadences of the priests.

Then the Rev. Mr. Gillette addressed the spectators in a deep impressive tone. The prisoner, Lewis Thornton Powell, otherwise Payne, requested him to thus publicly and sincerely return his thanks to General Hartrauft, the other officers, the soldiers, and all persons who had charge of him and had attended him. Not one unkind word, look, or gesture, had been given to him by any one. Dr. Gillette then followed in a fervent prayer in behalf of the prisoner, during which Payne's eyes momentarily filled with tears, and he followed in the prayer with visible feeling.

Rev. Dr. Olds followed, saying in behalf of the prisoner, David E. Harold, that he tendered his forgiveness to all who had wronged him, and asked the forgiveness of all whom he had wronged. He gave his thanks to the officers and guards for kindnesses rendered him. He hoped that he had died in charity with all men and at peace with God. Dr. Olds concluded with a feeling prayer for the prisoner.

Rev. Dr. Butler then made a similar return of thanks on behalf of George A. Atzerott for kindness received from his guards and attendants, and concluded with an earnest invocation in behalf of the criminal, saying that the

blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin, and asking that God Almighty might have mercy upon this man.

The solemnity of this portion of the scene may be imagined, the several clergyman speaking in order the dying testament of their clients, and making the hot hours fresh with the soft harmonies of their benedictions.

The two holy fathers having received Mrs. Surratt's confession, after the custom of their creed observed silence. In this, as in other respects, Mrs. Surratt's last hours were entirely modest and womanly.

The stage was still filled with people; the crisis of the occasion had come; the chairs were all withdrawn, and the condemned stood upon their feet.

The process of tying the limbs began.

It was with a shudder, almost a blush, that I saw an officer gather the ropes tightly three times about the robes of Mrs. Surratt, and bind her ankles with cords. She half fainted, and sank backward upon the attendants, her limbs yielding to the extremity of her terror, but uttering no cry, only a kind of sick groaning, like one in the weakness of fever, when a wry medicine must be taken.

Payne, with his feet firmly laced together, stood straight as one of the scaffold beams, and braced himself up so stoutly that this in part prevented the breaking of his neck.

Harold stood well beneath the drop, still whimpering at the lips, but taut, and short, and boyish.

Atzerott, in his grovelling attitude, while they tied him began to indulge in his old vice of gabbing. He evidently wished to make his finale more effective than his previous cowardly role, and perhaps was strengthening his fortitude with a speech, as we sometimes do of dark nights with a whistle.

"Gentlemen," he said, with a sort of choke and gasp, "take ware." He evidently meant "beware," or "take care," and confounded them.

Again, when the white death-cap was drawn over his face, he continued to cry out under it, once saying, "Good bye, shentlemens, who is before me now;" and again, "May we meet in the other world." Finally he drifted away with low, half-intelligible ebullitions, as "God help me," "oh! oh!" and the like.

The rest said nothing, except Mrs. Surratt, who asked to be supported, that she might not fall, but Harold protested against the knot with which he was to be dislocated, it being as huge as one's double fist.

In fact all the mechanical preparations were clumsy and inartistic, and the final scenes of the execution, therefore, revolting in the extreme. When the

death-caps were all drawn over the faces of the prisoners, and they stood in line in the awful suspense between absolute life and immediate death, a man at the neck of each adjusting the cord, the knot beneath the ears of each protruded five or six inches, and the cord was so thick that it could not be made to press tightly against the flesh.

So they stood, while nearly a thousand faces from window, roof, wall, yard and housetop, gazed, the scaffold behind them still densely packed with the assistants, and the four executioners beneath, standing at their swinging beams. The priests continued to murmur prayers. The people were dumb, as if each witness stood alone with none near by to talk to him.

An instant this continued, while an officer on the plot before, motioned back the assistants, and then with a forward thrust of his hand, signaled the executioners.

The great beams were darted against the props simultaneously. The two traps fell with a slam. The four bodies dropped like a single thing, outside the yet crowded remnant of the gallows floor, and swayed and turned, to and fro, here and there, forward and backward, and with many a helpless spasm, while the spectators took a little rush forward, and the ropes were taut as the struggling pulses of the dying.

Mrs. Surratt's neck was broken immediately; she scarcely drew one breath. Her short woman's figure, with the skirts looped closely about it, merely dangled by the vibration of her swift descent, and with the knot holding true under the ear, her head leaned sideways, and her pinioned arms seemed content with their confinement.

Payne died a horrible death; the knot slipped to the back of his neck, and bent his head forward on his breast, so that he strangled as he drew his deep chest almost to his chin, and the knees contracted till they almost seemed to touch his abdomen. The veins in his great wrists were like whip-cords, expanded to twice their natural dimensions, and the huge neck grew almost black with the dark blood that rushed in a flood to the circling rope. A long while he swayed and twisted and struggled, till at last nature ceased her rebellion and life went out unwillingly.

Harold also passed through some struggles. It is doubtful that his neck was broken. The perspiration dripped from his feet, and he swung in the hot noon just living enough to make death irritable.

Atzerott died easily. Life did not care to fight for his possession.

The two central figures lived long after the two upon the flanks.

There they hung, bundles of carcass and old clothes, four in a row, and past all conspiracy or ambition, the river rolling by without a sound, and

men watching them with a shiver, while the heat of the day seemed suddenly abated, as if by the sudden opening of a tomb.

The officers conversed in a half-audible tone; the reporters put up their books; the assistants descended from the gallows; and the medical men drew near. No wind stirred the unbreathing bodies, they were stone dead.

The bodies were allowed to hang about twenty minutes, when surgeon Otis, U. S. V., and Assistant Surgeons Woodward and Porter, U. S. A., examined them and pronounced all dead. In about ten minutes more a ladder was placed against the scaffold preparatory to cutting the bodies down. An over-zealous soldier on the platform reached over and severed the cord, letting one body fall with a thump, when he was immediately ordered down and reprimanded. The body of Atzerott was placed in a strong white pine box, and the other bodies cut down in the following order, Harold, Powell, and Mrs. Surratt.

The carcasses thus recovered were given over to a squad of soldiers and each placed in a pine box without uncovering the faces. The boxes were forthwith placed in the pits prepared for them, and directly all but the memory of their offense passed from the recording daylight.

In the gloomy shadow of that arsenal lies all the motive, and essay of a crime which might have changed the destinies of our race. It will be forever a place of suspicion and marvel, the haunted spot of the Capitol, and the terror of all who to end a fancied evil, cut their way to right with a dagger.

#### *Extra Mural Scenes.*

As everything connected with this expiation will be greedily read I compile from gossip and report a statement of the last intramural hours of the prisoners.

During the morning a female friend of Atzerott, from Port Tobacco, had an interview with him—she leaving him about eleven o'clock. He made the following statement:

He took a room at the Kirkwood House on Thursday, in order to get a pass from Vice-President Johnson to go to Richmond. Booth was to lease the Richmond theater and the President was to be invited to attend it when visiting Richmond, and captured there. Harold brought the pistol and knife to the room about half-past two o'clock on Friday. He (Atzerott) said he would have nothing to do with the murder of Johnson, when Booth said that Harold had more courage than Atzerott, and he wanted Atzerott to be with Harold to urge him to do it. There was a meeting at a restaurant about the middle of March, at which John Surratt, O'Laughlin, Booth, Arnold, Payne, Harold and himself were present, when a plan to capture the President was

discussed. They had heard the President was to visit a camp, and they proposed to capture him, coach and all, drive through long old fields to "T. B.," where the coach was to be left and fresh horses were to be got, and the party would proceed to the river to take a boat. Harold took a buggy to "T. B." in anticipation that Mr. Lincoln would be captured, and he was to go with the party to the river. Slavery had put him on the side of the South. He had heard it preached in church that the curse of God was upon the slaves, for they were turned black. He always hated the nigger and felt that they should be kept in ignorance. He had not received any money from Booth, although he had been promised that if they were successful they should never want, that they would be honored throughout the South, and that they could secure an exchange of prisoners and the recognition of the confederacy.

Harold slept well several hours, but most of the night he was sitting up, either engaged with his pastor, Rev. Mr. Olds, of Christ Church, or in prayer. His sisters were with him from an early hour this morning to twelve o'clock; they being present when he partook of the sacrament at the hands of Dr. Olds. The parting was particularly affecting. Harold conversed freely with them, and expressed himself prepared to die.

Powell conversed with Dr. Gillette and Dr. Striker on religious topics during the morning, sitting erect, as he did in the court-room. From his conversation it appears that he was raised religiously, and belonged to the Baptist church until after the breaking out of the rebellion. He appeared to be sincerely repentant, and in his cell shed tears freely. He gave his advisers several commissions of a private character, and stated that he was willing to meet his God, asking all men to forgive, and forgiving all who had done aught against him. Colonel Doster, his counsel, also took leave of him during the morning, as well as with Atzerott.

Mrs. Surratt's daughter was with her at an early hour. One of her male friends also had an interview with her, and received directions concerning the disposition of her property. During the night and morning she received the ministrations of Revs. J. A. Walter and B. F. Wigett, and conversed freely with them, expressing, while protesting her innocence, her willingness to meet her God. Her counsel, Messrs. Aiken & Clampitt, took leave of her during the morning.

A singular feature of this execution was the arrest of General Hancock this morning, who appeared in court, to answer a writ of *habeas corpus*, with a full staff. It is well to notice that this execution by military order has not, therefore, passed without civil protest. President Johnson extended to General Hancock the right conferred upon the President by Congress of setting aside the *habeas corpus*.

As usual in such executions as this, there were many stirring outside episodes, and much shrewd mixture of tragedy and business. A photographer took note of the scene in all its phases, from a window of a portion of the jail. Six artists were present, and thirty seven special correspondents, who came to Washington only for this occasion.

The passes to the execution were written not printed, and, excepting the bungling mechanism of the scaffold, the sorrowful event went off with more than usual good order. Every body feels relieved to night, because half of the crime is buried.

On Monday, Mudd, Arnold, O'Laughlin, and Spangler, will go northward to prison. The three former for life, the last for six years.

Applications for pardon were made yesterday and to-day to President Johnson, by Mrs. Samuel Mudd, who is quite woe-begone and disappointed, in behalf of her husband, by the sisters of Harold, and by Miss Ann Surratt. Harold's sisters, dressed in full mourning and heavily veiled, made their appearance at the White House, for the purpose of interceding with the President in behalf of their brother. Failing to see the President, they addressed a note to Mrs. Johnson, and expressed a hope that she would not turn a deaf ear to their pleadings. Mrs. Johnson being quite sick, it was deemed expedient by the ushers not to deliver the note, when, as a last expedient, the ladies asked permission to forward a note to Mrs. Patterson, the President's daughter, which privilege was not granted, as Mrs. Patterson is also quite indisposed to-day. The poor girls went away with their last hope shattered.

The misery of the pretty and heart-broken daughter of Mrs. Surratt is the talk of the city. This girl appears to have loved her mother with all the petulant passion of a child. She visited her constantly, and to-day made so stirring an effort to obtain her life that her devotion takes half the disgrace from the mother. She got the priests to speak in her behalf. Early to-day she knelt in the cell at her mother's feet, and sobbed, with now and then a pitiful scream till the gloomy corridors rang. She endeavored to win from Payne a statement that her mother was not accessory, and, as a last resort, flung herself upon the steps of the White-House, and made that portal memorable by her filial tears. About half-past 8 o'clock this morning, Miss Surratt, accompanied by a female friend, again visited the White-House, for the purpose of obtaining an interview with the President. The latter having given orders that he would receive no one to-day, the door-keeper stopped Miss Surratt at the foot of the steps leading up to the President's office, and would not permit her to proceed further. She then asked permission to see General Muzzy, the president's military secretary, who promptly answered the summons, and came down stairs where Miss Surratt was standing. As soon as the general made his appearance, Miss Surratt threw herself upon her knees before him,

and catching him by the coat, with loud sobs and streaming eyes, implored him to assist her in obtaining a hearing with the President. General Muzzy, in as tender a manner as possible, informed Miss Surratt that he could not comply with her request, as President Johnson's orders were imperative, and he would receive no one. Upon General Muzzy returning to his office, Miss Surratt threw herself upon the stair steps, where she remained a considerable length of time, sobbing aloud in the greatest anguish, protesting her mother's innocence, and imploring every one who came near her to intercede in her mother's behalf.

While thus weeping she declared her mother was too good and kind to be guilty of the enormous crime of which she was convicted, and asserted that if her mother was put to death she wished to die also. She was finally allowed to sit in the east room, where she lay in wait for all who entered, hoping to make them efficacious in her behalf, all the while uttering her weary heart in a woman's touching cries: but at last, certain of disappointment, she drove again to the jail and lay in her mother's cell, with the heavy face of one who brings ill-news. The parting will consecrate those gloomy walls. The daughter saw the mother pinioned and kissed her wet face as she went shuddering to the scaffold. The last words of Mrs. Surratt, as she went out of the jail, were addressed to a gentleman whom she had known.

"Good-bye, take care of Annie."

To-night there is crape on the door of the Surratt's, and a lonely lamp shines at a single window, where the sad orphan is thinking of her bereavement.

The bodies of the dead have been applied for but at present will not given up.

Judge Holt was petitioned all last night for the lives and liberties of the condemned, but he was inexorable.

The soldiers who hung the condemned were appointed against their will. I forbear to give their names as they do not wish the repute of executioners. They all belonged to the Fourteenth Veteran Reserve Infantry.

Here endeth the story of this tragedy upon a tragedy. All are glad that it is done. I am glad particularly. It has cost me how many journeying to Washington, how many hot midnights at the telegraph office, how many gallops into wild places, and how much revolting familiarity with blood.

The end has come. The slain, both good and evil, are in their graves, out of the reach of hangman and assassin. Only the correspondent never dies. He is the true Pantheist—going out of nature for a week, but bursting forth afresh in a day, and so insinuating himself into the history of our era that it is beginning to be hard to find out where the event ends and the writer begins.

Next week Ford's Theater opens with the "Octoroon." The gas will be pearly as ever; the scenes as rich. The blood-stained foot-lights will flash as of old upon merry and mimicking faces. So the world has its tragic ebullitions; but its real career is comedy. Over the graves of the good and the scaffolds of the evil, sits the leering Momus across whose face death sometimes brings sleep, but never a wrinkle.