

Submitted for approval by
P.S. Lucas
Michigan State College
E. Lansing, Michigan.

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and

TRIAL OF THE LINCOLN CONSPIRATORS

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Three of America's wars began in April. The opening gun of the Revolution was fired at Lexington April 19, 1775, the Mexican war began in that month, and the first blood of the Great Rebellion was shed in the Baltimore riots April 19, 1861. During the sixties of the last century, April 14 became the date of tragedies of more than national significance. John Wilkes Booth, the murderer of Abraham Lincoln, is said to have referred to the date as the "Ides of April". Fort Sumpter fell to the Confederate attack April 14, 1861. It was on the anniversary of its surrender four years later, when, with appropriate exercises, the nation's flag was again raised over the ruins by its former defender, General Anderson, that the beloved Lincoln last saw the light of day. Four years of unparalleled fratricidal strife had scarcely ended when the joy of victory was abruptly quenched by an insane actor, the efforts of whose rash act were felt for years by the South. Lincoln had stood, a barrier between the vengeance of the conqueror and the helplessness of the foe, the most conscientious and powerful friend of the South. His death hardened the North, released the government to a radical element advocating severe measures, and opened the South to the corrupt Carpetbag methods. Strange it is that the destiny of a nation may be shunted from its course by a vainglorious, irresponsible fanatic.

The assassination of President Lincoln and the revelation at their trial of the sordid plot of the conspirators are incidents that I would gladly blot from memory were it possible. I was not at the theatre at the time the President was shot, but was intimately associated with the events attendant to the identification and burial of Booth's body and the trial of the assassins. The burial of Booth was secret, with the result that many ridiculous stories have been circulated and have gained credence as to the disposal of his remains. Even today many people believe the murderer escaped, and that another man was killed at the Garrett farm and disposed of as the assassin. The same is true of the trial. Conducted as it was, more or less behind closed doors, much speculation has been indulged as to what actually took place. Information may be had of it only in obscure places. The mystery enshrouding it has lent complexion to the mythical proceedings so often ascribed to the event. The trial still remains the most intensely interesting record of American criminal annals.

In 1851, I came as an emigrant to the states from England, and established a home at Trevorton, Pennsylvania. The discord over slavery was at that time threatening. It is a matter of history how this increased in intensity as the years passed on. Most of the information among the rank and file was mere word of mouth news and therefore often distorted and exaggerated. At that early date a deep feeling of hatred was held for the institution of human slavery and all it stood for, much of it due, no doubt, to the fact that the average Pennsylvanian was a working man faced with the possibility of having to compete with slave labor. Antagonism was engendered by what was regarded as the arrogance of the slave owner, the slave hunter, and the states rights protagonists. As the issues became more clearly defined the enmity between the slavery proponents and abolitionists became more bitter, and hatred more inflamed by the innumerable arguments, charges and counter charges, aggressions and

counter aggressions. There was no middle ground to stand on, when opinions on the question were so diametrically opposite. This was especially true in a border state such as Pennsylvania. Those people, who believe the rebellion might have been averted by compromise, are not giving consideration to the temper of the two groups concerned.

Lincoln as a political figure, was practically unknown to the people of the East until 1858, the year of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Few of us fully understood the purport^e of these at the time, although we knew vaguely that the issues were being approached in such logical manner that there was possibility for solution of the problem. The next year, honest, but deluded, John Brown was executed in Virginia and again the sparks of hatred were fanned into flames. In 1860, Lincoln made his Cooper's Institute address, which had such a profound influence in forming, and subsequently, in crystallizing public opinion. This address gave the Pennsylvanian a figure, other than those of W. E. Seward and James Buchanan, to reckon with politically, and more than all else, gave promise of a decisive policy towards the vexing questions of slavery and union.

The rebellion was organized during the feeble administration of Buchanan. With the taking of office by Lincoln and the fall of Fort Sumpter a month later, came the call for volunteers. Several companies were speedily organized in Northumberland County. I well remember the high flown names assigned some of these. There were the "Bucktails", "Slifer Phalanx", "Archy Dick Rifles", "Union Guards", and similar designations. The approaching difficulties, most of us thought, would materialize into nothing more than a holiday skirmish. Contrary to Southern belief however, the reverses of the early part of the war but changed the enthusiasm of the North to grim determination, and Union reverses disillusioned the North as to Confederate ability and bravery. Each army approached the other as if meeting the power of an alien, despising his strength and underestimating his courage, gallantry, and devotion to his cause. Before the end, neither side had reason to doubt the bravery, determination, and resourcefulness of his adversary.

By 1862, men with families began to enlist. I attended drill in the little village of Trevorton, and was inducted into the service at Harrisburg, Pa., July 19, 1862, being assigned to Company G, 11th Pennsylvania Infantry. My career in the field was brief, for scarcely a month later, August 28, 1862, I received a wound at Thoroughfare Gap, Va. in the action the day before the second battle of Bull Run, as Lee pushed north in the advance which was ultimately checked at Antietam. The wound was such as to incapacitate me for field service, and on recovery, I was transferred July 1, 1863 to Company A, 12th Veterans Reserve Corps. This company, commanded by Captain James Cromie, was, with others of the same corps, assigned as guard at the Old Capitol Prison at 16th and M Streets, Washington. At that time the building was used to house Southern prisoners of war. It was this Veteran Reserve Corps, which was utilized in the work incident to the funeral of Lincoln, and the trial and execution of the conspirators.

Abraham Lincoln was a familiar figure about Washington during the years of the war, for he was impatient of the restraint which others, notably the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, wished to place about him. He drove, walked, and rode about much as he pleased, often alone. I saw him many times. His was the tall, awkward figure so often described. Yet he moved with a certain assured grace, the awkwardness being more that of his extraordinary size. His face, furrowed by the multiple cares and worries his position brought him, was an exceptionally strong face, kind, simple, capable, in spite of its air of sadness. Its most striking features were the dark, wonderful, deep set eyes. As so many have said, these eyes were capable of the most hilarious mirth, the flash of most righteous anger, or the most gloomy spirit. He assumed none of the grandiose airs then thought to be an essential to statesmen, stood on no pedestal, but walked among the common people he loved. He seemed accessible

to the most commonplace soldier with a grievance imaginery or otherwise. In addition to disgruntled soldiery and their relatives, there were the countless office seekers; those asking special favors; a large class offering gratuitous advice as to the conduct of the war and government; constant newspaper attacks and even friction among the members of his official household. His reprieves to sentenced soldiers were said to be ruining the discipline of the army. To all, he attempted to give individual attention, feeling, as he often stated, that this was part of his task. Small wonder his shoulders bent under a burden too great for any man. His occasional talks were noted for their clarity and pointedness. Most of these were prepared in advance and read from manuscript. When talking he was particularly impressive, his tall spare figure accentuating his fatherliness and quiet dignity. The face was tanned to the color of old parchment; he wore glasses when reading; the voice was rather high pitched.

There is no word that so fittingly describes the soldier's regard for Lincoln as that of "father". This appellation came from his common reference to the soldiers as "his boys", and it was reciprocated by the soldiers referring to him as "Father Abraham". He was so approachable, so human, so much a man of common clay. It did not seem to savor of familiarity to refer to him, as we did, as "Old Abe", "Father Abraham", "the Chief" and "Honest Abe". Occasionally there were murmurs over the removal of a favorite commander, and these replacements were frequent, but subsequent events proved the wisdom of the changes, and rather added to, than detracted from the confidence he unconsciously inspired.

No man was more revered in the hearts of those stationed in Washington than the President; hardly a day passed but there were stories of some new kindness done by him for the common soldier, some new evidence of his remarkable sympathy and understanding. A little incident will serve to illustrate the homely regard of the soldier for Lincoln, and the desire to fasten to him the traits of the common. He spoke briefly to the soldiers who had fled to Washington

after the first battle of Bull Run. He was said to have been rather shabbily dressed; several soldiers circulated the report, and it was eagerly believed, that his trousers were actually patched!

THE-ASSASSINATION

The surrender of Lee to Grant, April 9, 1865, at Appomatox Court House, did not end the war in a literal sense of the word, for there were other commands in the field, notably those of Joseph E. Johnston, Kirby Smith, and the cavalry of Forrest. Practically, however, the war was ended and the North and Washington, gave itself over to celebration. With many, the jubilation was boisterous and drunken; with others, a period of solemn thanksgiving, for this was the last week of Lent. Business places were enlivened with bunting and flags, and government buildings, especially the Capitol and War Department, brilliantly lighted at night with calcium lights. Washington was in gala dress and gave itself over to utter relaxation. The evening of April 13, there was an elaborate display of fireworks in the city. Bonfires blazed in the streets and bands played in different parts of the city. Relief was to be read on every face over the happy outcome of the long struggle and the end to the constant menace at the Capitol by the Southern armies. For the weary guard at the old prison a termination to the monotony of endless routine seemed at hand.

In the sixties the two more popular theatres in Washington were Grover's "National" and Ford's, the latter being located on 10th Street, between E and F Streets, some five or six blocks from the White House. Mr. Lincoln was a frequent attendant at the former theatre where he usually had with him his little son, Tad, or some other member of his household. In fact Tad, with his tutor, was at Grover's the night of the assassination. John Wilkes Booth had at one time played in stock at Grover's. Laura Keene, a well known actress of her day, was billed to appear at Ford's the evening of April 14, 1865, in her New York success, "Our American Cousin", Miss Keene playing the role of

"Florence Trenchard". The play was given as a benefit performance. On the afternoon of Good Friday, the 14th, the papers announced that the President, with General Grant, would attend "Our American Cousin". Doubtless it was not entirely the thrill of witnessing the famous actress' performance but the desire of seeing the renowned general, who had brought the war to a successful close, that attracted such a large attendance. A sudden change in the general's plans, which took him to his home at Burlington, N.J., where his children were in school, probably prevented an attempt on his life.

The "Old Capitol" prison was a shabby, worn, old building located on a hill back of the present capitol-then uncompleted - at what is now 16th and M Streets, some eleven or twelve blocks from the Executive Mansion. Near it stood Carroll Prison, both buildings being used for prisoners of war. The company of the Veterans Reserve Corps of which I was a member had been stationed as guards at the Old Capitol for many months, the time broken only by its being sent to Albany and New York during threatened draft riots. A new group of Confederate prisoners, numbering about one hundred, enroute to Fort Warren had arrived at the prison the afternoon of April 14. That night, I was relieved of duty shortly after ten o'clock, and, being more fortunate than many of the others, had located a plank to serve as a bed, for the frequent rains had made a quagmire of the grounds. The evening of the 14th was no exception to what seemed the rule, so far as rains were concerned, for it was very dark, the clouds hung low, and there was an occasional light drizzle. I had removed one shoe and placed it on the plank in lieu of a pillow, when the news of the assassination was brought us by Captain Cromie, who stated briefly that our President had been murdered.

There was a wild scurrying to ranks of those off duty and we were held in readiness to meet any emergency during the remainder of the night. Our company was assigned to guard the prisoners while two regiments patrolled the

prison outside. The first reports were to the effect that not only the President had been killed, but the entire Cabinet. Rumors came that the assassination presaged a general attack on the city by a Southern army which had eluded in some mysterious manner the belt of steel interposed between the city and the enemy. Threats were openly made of an attack on the prison by the populace and slaughter of the prisoners held there, for at that time the plot was believed to be of Confederate origin. Indeed, the nuclei of several mobs were formed on the streets, but these were broken up before much damage had been done. To the credit of the guard it may be said that neither was it unduly excited nor intimidated by the threats; it had been trained to calmness by experience in the field, where rumors were thick, and where no more was known of what was actually happening than on the evening of April 14. A remark of a high officer on the events of that evening has always been a source of great pride to me. "I felt no fear for the safety of the Southern prisoners," he said, "when I remembered the staunchness and faithfulness of the Veteran Corps guard."

The details of the assassination were well known. The President was accompanied at the theatre by Mrs. Lincoln, Major Rathbone and his fiancée, Miss Clara Harris, stepson and daughter of Senator Ira Harris of New York. The presidential party sat in a box some ten feet above the floor of the stage. The front of the box was decorated by a flag festooned about a picture of Washington. Access to the box was by means of a door from the balcony. Through this the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, entered, forestalling any effort to open it ~~and~~ after he entered, by means of a timber which had been fashioned previously. After the shot, in vaulting from the box to the floor of the stage, his spur caught on the folds of the flag ~~and~~ on the front of the box, and he fell heavily to the stage, breaking his left leg near the ankle. It was this accident, caused by the presence of the flag he flaunted, which so speedily

brought him to retribution. He had chosen for his deed a time when the stage was most free of players. Quickly recovering from his fall, he rushed to the back of the theatre where he escaped on a horse which was being held there for him by a boy attached to the theatre.

Booth was joined in his flight from Washington by David E. Herold, a young drug clerk who had fallen under the spell of the actor. Both fled across the Eastern Branch of the Potomac by the Navy Yard Bridge into Southern Maryland, stopping at the home of Doctor Samuel Mudd, a Confederate sympathizer and acquaintance of Booth, where the player's broken leg was put in splints and a rude crutch made for him. After several days of hiding, the two crossed the Potomac at Dent's Meadow and arrived the afternoon of April 24 at the home of Mr. R. H. Garrett, a few miles southwest of Port Royal, Virginia. Leaving their horses at the Potomac the two fugitives were hauled to Port Royal by a negro, named William Lucas. At the ferry they met three Confederate soldiers, Ruggles, Bainbridge, and Jett by name, who were on their way to their homes after surrender. These men gave them a lift to the Garrett home. Here, twelve days after his crime, Booth was located and shot, early the morning of April 26, 1865, by a group of cavalry, commanded by Colonel E. J. Conger and accompanied by Lieutenant L. B. Baker of the Government Secret Service. Herold surrendered and was brought back to Washington with the body of Booth. The party effecting Booth's capture had the day before found Captain Jett at Bowling Green, Va., and forced him to guide them to Booth's hiding place. The group had been sent on the search by Colonel Lafayette C. Baker, head of the government secret service, who had been ordered by Secretary of War, Stanton, to apprehend the men. Col. Baker was a cousin of the Lieutenant Baker, who made the actual capture. Colonel Baker's department was largely employed during the war in the detection of bounty jumpers, deserters, and Confederate contraband runners. Many of the detectives in the government forces had been discharged with the virtual end of the war, and these, with private operatives, urged by the tremendous rewards offered,

scoured the country side for the assassins. Not only these, but hundreds of soldiers also were used to search the swamps in the direction of the flight, and in which it was believed, the fugitives might be hiding.

But during the search remarkable progress was made in uncovering the plot. Early in the morning of April 15, a dark bay horse, saddled and bridled, was brought to the Old Capitol Prison. This horse, it was learned later, had been ridden by Lewis Thornton Powell, alias Lewis Payne, who, on the same evening of the President's murder, had attempted to kill Secretary of State, William E. Seward. Mr. Seward, at the time of the attack, was confined to his bed as the result of an accident a few days previous.

Mrs. Mary Surratt, a widow residing in the city, and her son, John H. Surratt, were suspected soon after the crime of complicity in the conspiracy because of their intiamacy with Booth, and because of information secured from a Mr. Louis Weichman, who had been for some time prior to the murder a boarder at the Surratt home. Powell was surprised at her home the night of April 17, and with the widow was arrested, Mrs. Surratt being confined in the Old Capitol Prison. The son escaped and was not apprehended until several years later.

THE FUNERAL OF LINCOLN

Shortly after being shot, Mr. Lincoln was tenderly carried from the theatre across the street to the home of a Mr. William Peterson. The bullet had entered the back of the left side of the head and lodged near the right eye. It was seen at once that the wound was fatal although the rugged constitution kept alive the feeble flame of life until a few minutes past seven the following morning. All night long the anxious crowd kept vigil, weeping and praying against hope that the life of him they loved might be spared. Rain began to fall as the martyr passed on to eternal rest.

Washington changed overnight from a city of gaiety to a city of sorrow. There was the sound of hammers ripping flags and bunting from buildings and homes for replacement with black. Expensive crepe fluttered from the homes of the wealthy but no less touching was the black cloth displayed on the homes of the lowly. No class showed more sincerely their grief than the colored. With their saviour, "Marse Linkum" gone, what future had they to face? With bells tolling, a city draped in black, a cold rain falling, universal sorrow, it would be difficult to visualize a day more gloomy than that of April 15.

While measures were being taken for prosecuting the search for Booth, the dead President was taken to the White House and prepared for burial. Here the funeral was held in the East Room at noon, Wednesday, April 19, after which the body was borne to the Capitol where it lay in state until the 21st. A long procession followed the remains to the Capitol, including the Cabinet, a detachment of cavalry, and a portion of the Veterans' Reserve Corps. All business was suspended by voluntary action and the streets surged with the tremendous crowds along Pennsylvania Avenue. Strong men and women wept bitterly, the sorrow of the colored man being especially touching. The casket was placed in the Capitol rotunda where Reverend Doctor Phineas D. Gurley of the Presbyterian Church, who had been at Lincoln's deathbed, offered an impressive prayer. Reverend Gurley was followed by Bishop Simpson, rector of the Methodist church, which Mr. Lincoln attended in Washington. On the morning of April 21, the body was taken to the station, where a special train waited, to begin the last long journey to the President's home at Springfield, Illinois. Though dead, Abraham Lincoln left in memory for the world the precious heritage of his God-like character and a task well done, his work rewarded only by sorrow to him save for the satisfaction of having carried his cross uncomplainingly to his own crucifixion.

DISPOSAL OF BOOTH'S BODY

After Powell's arrest at Mrs. Surratt's, he was placed in confinement on the monitor SAUGUS, then lying at anchor in the Navy Yard. Nearby lay the monitor MONTAUK, an ironclad which had gained a considerable reputation when in 1863, under the command of DuPont, it had attacked the Confederate fort at Genesis Point near Savannah, successfully capturing the blockade runner, NASHVILLE. A few days after Powell's capture George Atzerodt, the last of the quartet, believed to have been the more deeply implicated in the assassination plot, was apprehended with his brother-in-law, a Mr. Richter of Baltimore. Atzerodt was placed on the MONTAUK, Richter on the SAUGUS. Edward Spangler, a man engaged in odd work about the stage at Ford's theatre, who, it was believed, made the bar for the door of Lincoln's box at the playhouse and assisted Booth in making his escape, had been confined in the Old Capitol Prison, but was transferred, a few days later to the MONTAUK. To guard against conversation canvas sacks were placed over the heads of all the prisoners aboard the gunboats and all were in irons; but Powell, because of fears entertained of an attempt at suicide was more heavily shackled than the others. He was confined in a crude but strong cell, improvised in the coal bunker of the monitor. This cell was lighted only by a ship's lantern. During this interval Mrs. Surratt was held in the Old Capitol prison and at no time either previous to, or during the trial, did I see any irons on her. When the male prisoners were transferred from the Old Capitol to the gunboats our company was placed on the MONTAUK to continue as guards. Orders were strict that no person be allowed to converse with the suspects unless they carried the written permission of both Mr. Stanton and Mr. Welles, the Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy, respectively.

John Wilkes Booth was killed early in the morning of April 26, and his remains brought by steamer to Alexandria, Virginia, opposite Washington. Here, Colonel L. C. Baker, with a tug, met the steamer, and brought the dead assassin, shortly after midnight, to the MONTAUK. I, with three other soldiers, was assigned as special body guard. When placed on the deck, the remains were wrapped in a saddle blanket, which, during its long journey, had become blood soaked. This was removed, the body placed on an old door, and covered with a canvas, apparently a discarded sail. Herold, who was brought back to Washington with Booth, was hurried to the same vessel and placed in irons in the hold.

The body of Booth lay under an awning near the turret of the Montauk for two days. The shot that had killed him entered the back of the head in nearly the same place he had shot the President. The actor was a man midway of his twenties, of medium height, extremely well proportioned physically, with curling jet black hair. Probably to lessen the chance of recognition during his flight, he had shaved off his mustache, but there was a heavy growth of beard on his face. His face, although dusty from his long ride to the Potomac on a dilapidated army ambulance, was singularly handsome and bore no traces of the privation and suffering he must have endured. He wore a black suit, rather worn and torn by the hard usage given it during his ride. The left foot was swollen, and on it was a shoe, the boot having been cut away by Dr. Mudd to permit placing the leg in splints.

A commission was appointed at once to identify the dead man. This included the two Bakers; Lieutenant Colonel Conger, who commanded the cavalry troop which captured Booth; Judge Advocate General Holt; Surgeon General Barnes; a photographer; and four or five others whom I did not know. Many of these had known Booth well and were positive in their identification, for he was a well known figure about Washington, an actor well known not so much for his own talents as for his being the brother of the eminent tragedian, Edwin Booth.

The body was identified, also, by a doctor, who, two years before, had removed a small tumor from the neck. In addition, the initials, "J. W. B." were tattooed in black ink upon the right hand. When this commission retired to consider their findings, an autopsy was performed by Surgeon General Barnes, who removed that portion of the neck, spine, and back of the head through which the bullet had passed. The remains were disturbed in no other manner.

The secrecy observed in the disposal of the body of Booth was considered necessary because of attempts that might be made to recover it by sympathizers. After its disappearance papers reported that it had been quartered and sunk in the Potomac; others carried the interesting information that it had been buried face down and had been awarded other similar indignities. It is needless to say that the remains were handled decently and that the government did not stoop to such senseless methods. If the burial place had been made public the grave would have been interesting only to the morbidly curious, a thing to connect with the story of the crime. About the middle of the second afternoon after the body was brought to the "MONTAUK", the body guard was given orders to deliver it, if called for by two men in a boat, but to fire upon, without warning, any other boat making an attempt to secure it. These instructions were to be confided to no one. A few hours later, shortly before dusk, a boat carrying but two men approached the side of the ironclad. It was manned by Colonel Baker, and his cousin, Lieutenant Baker. In the boat was a heavy iron ball and chain. We wrapped the dead actor in a navy blanket and passed him over the side of the ship to the waiting men. The naval officers were astonished at this unexpected removal of the remains and seemed to think the procedure unauthorized. The ball and chain in the boat led all of us to the conclusion that the body was to be weighted and sunk in the river or sea. It developed that this was exactly the impression the Bakers wished to convey. Indeed the ruse was so effective, that there were well authenticated reports

that attempts were made to recover the remains of Booth by dragging the river. Evening was falling as the boat rowed by Lieutenant Baker dropped down the East Branch around the point and out on the bosom of the Potomac. Our detachment being ordered back to the Old Capitol Prison, I thought my part in the distasteful duty ended.

That night, however, I was ordered to that part of the Old Penitentiary which had been appropriated for use as an arsenal. The cells on the ground floor were full of boxes and ammunition, but one had been cleared. A large flagstone, composing in part the floor of the cell, was raised and a shallow grave dug beneath. Here, in cell number one hundred, near midnight, the blanket shrouded body of the assassin was interred in the presence of some five or six men, a pine gun box serving as a casket. The grave was filled, the flagstone replaced, the boxes moved back, and the room left as before. Strict orders were given that all knowledge of the burial must be kept secret, until such time as the orders might be rescinded by the War Department. Some of the details were given a few years later by Colonel Baker but in the minds of many there still remains considerable mystery as to what actually took place.

By many people, both at the time and subsequent to the crime, John Wilkes Booth has been regarded as a man of unsound mind. There is said to have been a touch of insanity in the family, especially noticeable in the illustrious father, Junius Brutus Booth, a famous actor in his day. John Wilkes had been on the stage since his teens and seems to have made a favorable impression by his acting in the South. His elder brother, Edwin, was well known as a tragedian in 1865, but the younger Booth, both by temperament and his beauty of person, seemed better fitted for romantic roles. He was a skilled athlete and used this ability to advantage in his stage parts. In addition he was an excellent fencer, and a very good horseman, full of fire and vigor. Of the Booth family, he alone, was an ardent partisan of the Southern cause. These

sentiments were well known, but it was not thought they had reached the extent of such ferocity. As a member of the Richmond Grays he was present at the execution of John Brown, but he did not serve in the Confederate army during the war. In Washington he was regarded as a man of rash impulses, capricious, the possessor of a violent temper, dissipated, and extremely fond of strong drink.

TRIAL OF THE CONSPIRATORS

Remarkable speed was made in uncovering the assassination plot, but its ramifications were so many that there was considerable confusion, and probably many unnecessary arrests. Evidence showed the the original plot embraced only the abduction of the president. This plot, hatched before the end of the war, involved Booth, Dr. Mudd, Mrs. Surratt, John Surratt, Herold, Atzerodt, Samuel Arnold, and Michael O'Laughlin. The last two named had been Confederate soldiers and O'Laughlin had been a school^{te}acher of Booth. Of the prisoners taken after the assassination, the above named, with Edward Spangler, the theatre handyman, were most deeply implicated. On April 29, the prisoners, a portion of the Veterans' Reserve Corps acting as guard, were transferred from the ironclads to the arsenal for trial. The arsenal at that time was held in charge by General Hancock.

Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, was among the first suspected in the murder plot, and at the time of his capture there was a reward offered for his arrest as an accomplice. He was taken May 10, near Irwinville, Ga. and with his staff and secretary, Mr. Burton Harrison, brought to Washington, from which place Davis was sent to Fort Delaware, while the remainder of the party was imprisoned in the arsenal. Some twenty prisoners in all were held in the arsenal, but several others, detained as suspects or ~~eyewitnesses~~witnesses, were confined in Carroll Prison, as well as in the Old Capitol. When the suspects were being brought in, General Hancock, in charge of the

arsenal, called General John Hartranft to assume charge of the prisoners, and appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Christian Rath, provost marshal.

President Johnson sought the opinion of the Attorney General as to whether the prisoners should be tried by a civil or military court. The latter ruled that inasmuch as their crime had been committed against the state in time of war it was proper they be accorded a military trial. At the time of the assassination the Confederate commands of Kirby Smith and Joseph E. Johnston were still in the field. This decision served as a basis for a heated political controversy in a later presidential campaign, but undoubtedly a military court offered the fairest form of trial the conspirators could have had, for their act had thrust the iron into the northern heart, and public opinion was so furious over the atrocity that it was in no mood to mete out unprejudiced judgment.

On May 1, the President issued orders for the appointment of a military commission to try the conspirators. Nine officers of high military rank, well known for their calm judgment, composed the military court, Major General David Hunter, president of the court; Major General Lew Wallace, afterwards famous as the author of "Ben Hur"; Major General Kautz; Brigadier General Foster; Brigadier General How^e; Brigadier General Harris; Brigadier General Ekin; Colonel Tompkins; and, Lieutenant Colonel Clendennin. Brigadier General Joseph Holt, Secretary of War in 1860 under Buchanan, acted as Judge Advocate; and Major General Hartranft was special provost marshal or marshal of the court. Attorneys for the prisoners were Messrs. Aiken, Clampitt, and Johnson (the last named withdrew shortly after the opening of the trial) for Mrs. Surratt, Mr. Doster for both Payne and Atzerodt, Mr. Ewing for Dr. Mudd, Spangler, and Arnold, in addition to Mr. Frederick Stone for Dr. Mudd and Herold, and Mr. Cox for O'Laughlin. The preliminaries incident to the trial began May 10, although the trial proper did not open until May 13.

Court proceedings were held in the old penitentiary on the north side of the U. S. Arsenal, which was located at what was known as Greenleaf's Point, near the place of confluence of the Eastern Branch and the Potomac. At the beginning of the war the convicts confined in the old penitentiary had been moved to the prison at Albany, N. Y., and the vacated building appropriated for use as an addition to the arsenal. A room for the trial was prepared on the third floor of the northeast corner of the building. This room was nearly square, probably some forty feet either way, and was lighted by gas. At the west end, a raised platform was constructed which served as a dock for the prisoners and at the south end of this dock was a door through which the eight suspects were led to and from their cells. There were tables for the commission, reporters, and the prisoner's attorneys. The witness' chair was in the center of the room, facing the long table at which sat the members of the commission in full uniform. Seven male prisoners were tried. Between each sat a guard from the Veterans' Reserve Corps. Mrs. Surratt was seated at the left of the prisoner's dock, next the door leading to the cells. With the exception of Mrs. Surratt, the conspirators were secured by ankle chains. To those on Powell and Atzerodt were attached chains fastened to a heavy iron ball, which had to be carried by the guard as they were brought into the courtroom. The hands of the male prisoners were manacled by rigid handcuffs which held each hand about twelve inches from the other. When out of the court room the men were confined in separate cells, each being attended by four guards. Freedom of movement about the cells was prevented by a ball and chain attached to the left ankle and by the rigid handcuffs. During the early part of the prisoners' incarceration the heads of each, except that of Mrs. Surratt, were covered with flannel hoods, through which holes were made for the mouth and nose. This was thought necessary because Powell had made an attempt at suicide at the arsenal by striking his head against the walls of his cell. Later these hoods were removed

because of the heat. The prisoners were well, if plainly fed, and were allowed exercise in the prison yard.

I was told by some of the guards attending the prisoners that Powell was especially likable and good natured, although apparently, he was intimate with none of the other suspects. Dr. Mudd was sullen and continually complaining of the food served him, the treatment he was given, and the injustice of the charge lodged against him. Almost constantly, he protested his innocence.

At the beginning of the trial, soldier volunteers and a detachment from the Veterans' Reserve Corps were placed under the orders of General Hartranft as a guard for the prison. All avenues of escape for the accused were thoroughly closed. While included in the detachment from the Veterans' Corps, I was not placed on guard duty, but, with six others, was detailed to carry messages about the court room. These were largely to and from the War Department. Colonel Richard Watts, having been appointed acting adjutant general, had in charge all messages sent out of the court room. My duties at the court were not arduous, and I had ample time, therefore, for observation and to follow the details of the trial.

The conspirators were charged with having been "incited and encouraged to treason and murder by Jefferson Davis and the Confederate emissaries in Canada". This charge was not proved against the Confederate president. Evidence showed conclusively, rather, that he was not concerned in the plot. His secretary, Burton Harrison, was in court a few days only, being removed to Fort Delaware. Miss Anna Surratt, the intelligent, pretty daughter of Mrs. Surratt, was held as a witness by the government, but added little to the case, other than the fact that she was entirely ignorant of the plot. Much time was spent in an endeavor to establish the connection of the conspiracy with the rebel commissioners in Canada. These men had been active in encouraging raids over the border and in otherwise hindering conduct of the war. The burning of St. Albans, Vermont and looting of the city's bank had had its origin

with them. Booth, as well as John Surratt, had been to Canada, and had consulted, it was believed, with these emissaries. Atzerodt, it was learned, had acted as messenger for them in carrying messages, probably in code, to the Confederate lines. Copy of the cipher was found in Booth's effects after his death. Happily this attempt to connect the southern government with the plot failed. One witness only testified that the south sanctioned the murder and because of his unsavory record his statement was held valueless.

Mr. Louis Weichman, a young man in his early twenties, who had roomed and boarded at Mrs. Surratt's home for two years previous to the assassination, was the principle witness for the prosecution. Mr. Weichman had formerly been a teacher, had studied for the Catholic priesthood, at a church school, not far from Baltimore, where he had become acquainted with John Surratt, and the year before the assassination, had been appointed to a clerkship in the War Department. He was a particularly intelligent and straightforward young man, answering all questions with a frankness and sincerity that convinced the commission of his honesty. His testimony supplied the details of the conspiracy as it is now believed to have taken place. During the severe cross examination this testimony was unshaken in any detail. The letters of Booth, which had been seized, filled in many of the gaps, and, incidentally, since they proved that the two had withdrawn from the conspiracy after the failure of the abduction plot, saved O'Laughlin and Arnold from the fate of their companions.

Testimony at the trial developed the points that the conspiracy at its inception contemplated only the kidnapping of the president, and once within the Confederate lines, using him as a means for forcing a peace favorable to the South. These plans were carefully laid and were not so rash as might at first thought be supposed. Mr. Lincoln was accustomed to go about Washington much as he pleased and without proper escort. Among the places he visited frequently was the Soldiers' Home. The plan was to seize him when returning

from one of these trips; Atzerodt, the coach painter, to drive him South; Herold, who was well acquainted with the countryside through which the flight was to be made, to act as guide. On the night selected for the abduction, the intended victim failed to appear and the scheme fell through. Arnold, O'Laughlin, and Dr. Mudd, as well as the other conspirators, were implicated in this plan, not to mention other Confederate sympathizers along the proposed route by which the victim was to be taken. Booth had spent considerable time in this district, ostensibly interested in hunting and in buying land and horses, but actually to familiarize himself with the country. On these occasions he several times visited Dr. Mudd. Apparently crazed by the failure of his original plan and the surrender of Lee's army, Booth conceived the desperate idea of murdering General Grant, the President and his Cabinet. Arnold and O'Laughlin although it was shown that they had withdrawn from the conspiracy had made no effort to inform the government of danger. Dr. Mudd was not shown to be implicated other than that he had aided the perpetrators in their attempted escape. When taken, Dr. Mudd stoutly maintained that he did not know Booth. At the trial however his relatives testified that the actor had been at his home several times. Other witnesses told of his calling on Booth in Washington. The guilt of the other prisoners was proved beyond any reasonable doubt.

The men Booth gathered about him, with the exception of Dr. Mudd, were of such low caste as to be classed as "toughs". To these ignorant fellows, Booth with his stage glamour undoubtedly appeared as a superior being. Unconsciously they fed the actor's excessive vanity, and lent themselves as pliable clay in his hands. Drunk with the obsession that he was to be by his act a second Brutus in liberating his country of a tyrant and steeled for the act by hard drink, Booth carefully made his plans. The actor took for himself the leading role

in the tragedy, the murder of the President; Atzerodt was to kill the vice-president, Andrew Johnson; Powell, to do away with the secretary of state, Seward; Surratt's task was not made known, although it was thought to have been the murder of Grant. At the last moment, Atzerodt's courage failed him. Herold, while privy to the plot, acted throughout as Booth's companion and guide. On the afternoon of April 14, he had hired a horse at Fletcher's Livery Stable, and, at shortly after 9 P.M., when hailed on the streets and told by the liveryman that the horse must be returned, he set spurs to the animal, eluded Fletcher, succeeded later in the evening in crossing the Navy Yard Bridge, and joining Booth, guided him to the home of Dr. Mudd. When preparing to cross the Rappahannock, near the Garrett farm, he revealed himself and Booth to the three Confederate soldiers met there with the boast, "We are the assassins of Lincoln." Booth, apparently evaluating Herold's silly lightness at its true worth, seems to have assigned him no other duty than that of guide. When Herold left him in the burning barn at the Garrett farm he is said to have told Baker's men that Herold had no part in the murder. John Surratt fled Washington the day or night of the assassination, going to Canada, thence to England and Italy, joined the Papal Reserves, where he was recognized by a former acquaintance. Arrested, he escaped, fled to Egypt, was again arrested, brought to the States, and tried by a civil court. The first jury disagreeing, he was eventually released to augment that group of criminals who have escaped a just punishment by the peculiarities of our court system.

Mrs. Mary Surratt lived in Washington in 1865, but owned property in Surrattsville, Md., a short distance southeast of the city. The inn, formerly conducted by her at this place, had been leased to John Lloyd. The tenant was a confirmed drunkard, of inferior intellect. Two carbines had been left with Lloyd, to be called for by Booth and Herold. On the afternoon of April 14

Mrs. Surratt requested Weichman to drive her to Lloyd's, which he did, the carriage hire being paid by Booth. She carried two packages wrapped in paper, one of which contained pistols and Booth's field glasses, later found at Garrett's farm. These, she informed the innkeeper would be called for that night. Several remarks, made to Weichman and Lloyd, lent strong suspicion of her deep implication in all details of the plot. The defence strove to prove that she was the innocent tool of Booth, alleging that the arms left at the tavern were for Booth, who requested this favor of her stating that he planned a hunting trip in that vicinity.

Many of those who aided Booth and Herold in their flight were called as witnesses, but it was apparent that their crime was one of sympathy or ignorance as to his identity. In his diary, kept during the flight and found on his body, the assassin complained bitterly of the coldness which he was accorded by the better classes in Virginia. Instead of acclamation he was received with horror, was given a barn or negro quarters to sleep in, and was treated as a rabid animal until his wretched end brought oblivion. Mr. Garrett, at whose home he was killed, did not know him, but thought him a wounded ex-Confederate soldier, accused of some minor offense, who was, therefore, anxious to avoid meeting any of the Union soldiery.

Spangler, the scene shifter at Ford's prepared the avenue of escape for Booth in the theatre and probably prepared the bar used to close the entrance to the vestibule leading to the President's box, through which pursuers would likely follow. Why there was no guard at this entrance, or why, if there was one, the assassin was allowed to enter, remains a mystery. Spangler's guilt was more apparent than is commonly believed. He was a devoted admirer and frequent companion of Booth in drinking bouts. As the murderer fled across the stage, the scene shifter struck a fellow worker across the mouth commanding

him to keep quiet and not to inform the pursuers the way of escape. He had held Booth's horse back of the theatre, but his presence on the stage being required, had assigned this task to a boy connected with the theatre.

On June 28, 1865, I was discharged from the army and thus saved the spectacle of the execution of the conspirators. The trial had ended by that time, the findings of the court were made known, and the sentences approved and carried into effect July 7, Mrs. Surratt, Powell, Herold, and Atzerodt being hanged in the penitentiary yard the afternoon of that day. The bodies were buried near the gallows, but a few years later given over to relatives. Mudd, O'Laughlin and Arnold were sentenced to life imprisonment at Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortuga, Florida, and Spangler sentenced to six years imprisonment at the same place.

Prior to, and during the long trial, I had ample opportunity to observe the prisoners. Of the eight, Mrs. Surratt was the most interesting. She was the widow of John H. Surratt Sr., a slave owner in Maryland, who, in spite of his slaves, was said to be sympathetic to the Union cause. After the death of Mr. Surratt in the early years of the war, the widow removed to Washington where she kept a boarding and rooming house. At the time of the trial she was about forty-five years of age and more than ordinarily handsome. She always appeared heavily veiled, a circumstance that must have been irritating to General Wallace, a member of the military commission, who spent much time sketching the prisoners. She had the appearance of a cultured, refined woman, and, in spite of the trying ordeal, bore herself in a courageous manner, at times appearing even stolid and resigned to her fate. Her daughter, Anna, about seventeen years old, was with her most of the time, and, it was said by the guards that the scenes in the mother's cell were pitiful in the extreme. Mother and daughter were very devoted to each other, and the latter left no stone unturned in her effort to secure commutation of the sentence. The testimony of Mr.

Weichman gave Mrs. Surratt an exemplary character, except for her apparent complicity in the plot. Her home became the rendezvous of the conspirators upon the entrance of Booth in 1864, and, doubtless all the details were planned there. Although there was no question as to Mrs. Surratt's guilt, most people expected her sentence would be commuted to life imprisonment because of her age and sex, and, indeed, five members of the commission so recommended, but the recommendation was not acceptable to President Johnson and his Cabinet.

Second in interest only to Mrs. Surratt was Lewis Powell, who, at the time of the trial, went under the name of Lewis Payne. He was a native of Florida, an ex-Confederate soldier, who had been wounded at Gettysburg, taken prisoner, and brought to the hospital at Baltimore, where, upon recovery, he violated his parole, and absconded. During the intervening years of 1863-5, he spent his time between Washington and Baltimore, traveling under several assumed names. Two of his brothers had been killed in the Southern army. Although a mere boy of twenty, he was a remarkable specimen of physical manhood, standing well over six feet in height, and proportioned accordingly. His close fitting garb ~~showed~~ showed beneath in his every movement the wonderful play of his powerful muscles. He appeared to have no knowledge of the word fear, gazing fully with his dark eyes into the faces of the commission without the least wavering. He neither denied nor admitted his guilt despite the fact that many efforts and ruses were resorted to in order to elicit a confession. His was the fanatical spirit of old John Brown; no remorse was shown at any time over his deed. This calm and cheerfulness he maintained to the end. Powell considered himself the cause of Mrs. Surratt's plight, a circumstance for which he often cursed himself bitterly. When on the evening of the arrest officers came to question her, he walked into the house, hatless, with a pick over his shoulder. To the questions of the officers he replied that he was digging a ditch

for the woman. Mrs. Surratt solemnly stated that she had never seen the man before. Other inquiries were so unsatisfactorily answered that both were taken into custody, Mrs. Surratt's statements later being proved false and Powell being positively identified by several witnesses as Seward's assailant. On several occasions Powell declared the widow innocent of the crime. The last of these was made to General Hartranft the morning of the day of execution. To the guards Powell was invariably courteous, affable, and uncomplaining, and of the prisoners, easily the most agreeable. Unlike Mrs. Surratt he was not convicted on circumstantial evidence, but, to his credit, be it said, that he faced the penalties of his guilt with the utmost bravery.

Perhaps the most miserable of the assassins was George Atzerodt, a German who spoke English with great difficulty, and who was scarcely able to sign his own name. He was a man of thirty-three years, a carriage painter by trade, working during the war at Port Tobacco, Md., from which place he also smuggled mail across the Potomac to the rebel lines. His figure was shambling, the body short though strongly built, the general appearance very slouchy, his mind slow, his intelligence below par. His story of the plot was so confused as to be almost unintelligible. At the trial, his testimony, as well as that of the other conspirators, was ruled as inadmissible. During the trial he sat with lowered shifting eyes like a cornered wild animal, appearing at times as if he knew very little of what was happening. He was a picture of shiftlessness, a man who invariably followed the easier path. It was doubtless these qualities which made him so readily the pliable tool in Booth's hands, and which also made impossible for him the courage required to carry out the task assigned him of murdering Johnson. At the trial his counsel read a statement made by him, in which was admitted his part in the abduction plot. His was the only statement made by the prisoners.

David Herold, although three years older than Powell, had more the appearance of a boy. His father had been a U. S. Navy clerk in Washington but died in 1864. The boy had been a clerk in drug stores in Washington and it was in that city he made the acquaintance of Booth. His employers testified as to his weak, unreliable, trifling nature. Herold's assignment in the conspiracy was not disclosed at the court, though it was probably only the role of guide. Herold was not prepossessing in appearance with his slender form and weak face, crowned with a shock of black hair. His conversation was jerky and flighty, his look furtive and his entire manner irresolute and cowardly. Like Atzerodt he was a weakling easily influenced by Booth.

With Powell, Dr. Mudd was one of the stronger minded of the prisoners. The doctor was nearing his fifties and had been for years a practicing physician near Bryantown, Md., where he owned and lived on a farm. Dr. Mudd was tall, rather spare in frame, slightly bald, had whiskers and mustache, and was well and neatly dressed, and possessed a keen and intelligent face. It was proved at the trial that he was well acquainted with Booth. Had it not been for this it is probable that the mere fact that he attended Booth professionally would have been construed as a matter of his routine duty rather than the aiding and abetting of a murderer. If there were any doubt as to his guilt it was dissipated by his later confession, made to a captain of a company of the Veterans Reserve Corps which acted as guard at the time he was taken to the Dry Tortugas. During his stay at the Florida prison an epidemic of yellow fever broke out which threatened to depopulate the fort. Dr. Mudd took charge and by providing thorough sanitation was able to smother the disease. For his part he was unconditionally pardoned in 1869.

Edward Spangler was about forty years of age, a native of Pennsylvania, although he considered Baltimore his home. He was a man who, to judge from appearances, had seen the harder side of life. At the time of the assassination

he was employed at Ford's Theatre at odd work as an assistant carpenter, and, during the appearance of "Our American Cousin", was engaged in shifting scenery. During his incarceration and during the trial, Spangler was conspicuous for no other reason than his huge appetite. He was considered as harmless and of such low intelligence as to be of practically no use to Booth. He was well acquainted with the actor and is said to have worn his cast off clothing. Nothing was proved against Spangler at the trial; he was convicted on purely circumstantial evidence, as indeed was Herold. Probably he knew nothing of the plot earlier than a few hours before it was consummated. His sentence of six years to the Dry Tortugas was terminated in 1869 by a pardon, but he died soon after his release.

Michael O'Laughlin had been a confederate soldier and former schoolmate of Booth's. He was about thirty years of age, very slight in his physical make up, dark complexioned, and very quiet in manner. It would appear that he took no part in the assassination, although it was proved that he was connected with the original plot of kidnapping Mr. Lincoln, and, doubtless, knew of the later plan of murdering him. At the trial the prosecution endeavored to prove that he was assigned the task of murdering Grant. O'Laughlin died in prison of yellow fever a few years after his conviction.

The last of the convicted conspirators, Samuel Arnold, was twenty-eight years old, an ex-Confederate soldier, and, like O'Laughlin, made his home in Baltimore. His participation in the plot was practically identical to that of O'Laughlin. Arnold, at the time of the assassination was bookkeeper in a store at Fortress Monroe. He received a life sentence, but surviving the yellow fever epidemic, was also pardoned in 1869, by President Johnson.

Other suspects at the time of the trial were confined in the prisons about the city. Among these was John Ford, the proprietor of Ford's Theatre, in which Lincoln was shot. Ford was held in Carroll prison about a month and

being released was never brought to trial. Mr. Ford was a Union sympathizer and felt very keenly the suspicion cast upon him. This humiliation, though unintended, occasioned the bitter controversy he aroused years later by his attacks on the personnel of the military court, and the brutal treatment, he alleged, had been accorded the prisoners. It is obvious that his accusations were utterly groundless.

EDWIN BOOTH

No suspicion whatever attached to other members of the Booth family. The elder brother, Edwin, was at the time of the assassination well established as a gifted tragedian. He was called at the trial but soon dismissed after answering a few questions. His Union sentiments and admiration for Lincoln were well known. He was overcome by the act of his brother and withdrew from the stage for several months until a sympathetic and generous public insisted on his return.

In 1868 I moved from Pennsylvania to Lafayette, Indiana, and for a year was connected with the Lafayette Opera House. Edwin Booth, at the behest of his heart broken mother, had several times sought permission to have the remains of his brother brought from Washington to be interred at Baltimore. Probably influenced by the silly rumors that it was not his brother's body that was buried in the old penitentiary and by the secrecy surrounding the burial, Mr. Booth, having learned that I had been present at the interment, came to Lafayette in the winter of 1868. He was told all that I knew of the tragedy. He related the story of his efforts to secure the body; that the mad act of his brother was the blow which was slowly, but surely killing his mother. He was very reticent and seemed deeply depressed at having to delve in the painful details of his brother's act. The next year, 1869, I learned that his just plea was granted, and that the body of his brother was disinterred, identified, and placed in its final resting place in the family lot in Green Mount Cemetery, Baltimore, the only request of the government being that no marker should be placed at the grave. About this same time the bodies of the other conspirators were delivered to relatives and buried in or about Washington.