

Washington, D. C.  
April 16<sup>th</sup>/65.

My dear Mother

Beck has not come from the Office yet and I have not received your letter but as I have a good deal to write I will begin now - I suppose by tomorrow the mail will go out from Wash. No trains left yesterday - What I have to write is with reference to the great tragedy which has caused a nation to mourn - I had the misfortune to be at Lord's Theatre on Friday evening & to hear the shot which deprived us of a President.

It was given out during the day that Mrs Lincoln had engaged a "Box" for the President & Genl Grant and having a desire not only to see them but to see the "American Cousin" performed,

we determined to go - Before we went  
Beck knew that the Gen<sup>l</sup> would  
not be there as he was to have for  
his home in the evening - We went  
a few moments before the time &  
waited some time for the President  
to arrive & as he did not come until  
late the performances commenced  
& we thought we were to be disappoint-  
ed in not seeing him - In the  
midst of the 2<sup>d</sup> scene there was a  
great applause & cheering and our  
attention was directed from the  
stage to the Dress circle - close to the  
wall - walked Miss Harris - Mrs  
Lincoln - Major Rathbun - a gentleman  
the President & another gentleman  
behind him - These two gentlemen  
were watchman in citizens dress who  
have always accompanied the  
President since the War commenced  
We followed him with our eyes  
until he entered the Box little

thinking we were looking for the last time at him - He sat looking on the stage his back to us and out of our sight behind the flags except occasionally when he would lean forward - Mrs Lincoln was in front of them and we only saw her occasionally - He saw her smile & turn towards him several times - It was while every one's attention was fastened upon the stage that a pistol shot was heard causing every one to jump (as an unexpected shot will) & look up at the President's Box merely because that was the direction of the sound and supposing it to be part of the performance we all looked again on the stage - when a man suddenly vaulted over the railing of the Box - turned back & ~~leaped~~ then leaped to the stage - striking on his heels & falling backward

but recovered himself in an instant  
and started across the stage to  
behind the scenes flourishing a  
knife - the blade of which appeared  
in the reflection of the bright lights  
to be half as long <sup>as</sup> a man's arm -  
and making use of the expressions  
you have seen in the Papers -

He had nearly disappeared  
before we could understand what  
it was or what had happened -  
The first thought it was a crazy  
man - when he jumped on to the  
stage we all jumped to our feet  
& stood spell bound - as he crossed  
the stage some few started toward  
the stage crying - our President!  
our President is shot! catch  
him - hang him! Miss Harris  
was seen lean over the railing for  
water & that was all that broke  
the stillness in that box - If those  
watch had called out as soon

as the man jumped to give us  
an idea of what had happened  
he could have been caught as he  
stopped to recover himself after the  
fall - There was not a soul to be  
seen in the Box and perfect still-  
ness there which all added to  
our bewilderment - one man got  
up on a chair on hearing that the  
man was caught & said "take out  
the ladies & hang him here on the  
spot" - Booth fearing a mob  
hurried me out - leaving the audience  
still standing awed & speechless.  
We waited outside until a young  
man came out & said "He is  
dead - no doubt about it!"

Before we got out of the door some  
one said "It was J. Wilkes Booth"  
and before I got out, the idea  
that our Chief was gone - almost  
our sole dependence <sup>overcame me</sup> - I could  
not control myself & sobbed aloud

We met several outside the door  
just coming in asking "For God's  
sake tell me is it true?" as if they  
had heard already rumors of the  
great tragedy - The reason  
that we could not suddenly  
realize what had occurred was  
because we could not anticipate  
that an assassin could be in  
the Box with the President - His  
only danger seemed to be from  
a shot fired by one of the audience.

Booth entered the front door  
and asked some one there if Gen<sup>l</sup>  
Grant was there that night - then  
went along to the door of the Box -  
just where we had seen the President  
enter - Knocked at the door & to  
the watch who opened it, said he  
wished to speak to the President, that  
he had a communication for him  
showing an Official envelope &  
giving him a card with the name  
of a Senator written on it - The

watch stepped aside & the assassin  
entered & fired immediately while  
Mr Lincoln was looking on the stage

The excitement that night  
was intense & a mob of about 2000  
went to the Old Capitol Prison to  
burn it & they called upon the  
people to come out & see the rebel  
burn - The Police & troops were out  
& put a stop to it or it would have  
been done - The assassin at  
Seward's first stabbed the ~~back~~  
<sup>more</sup> ~~recess~~ through the lungs & killed  
him I believe - knocked in the  
skull of Fred Seward with a  
butt of a pistol & stabbed another  
man - all had opposed his entrance  
and the old man hearing the  
ruffle at the door & thinking  
it was some one after him, rolled  
out of bed on <sup>to</sup> the floor and the  
assassin had to lean over the bed  
to ~~make~~ stab him so he only

had two cuts - on his neck & face -  
which will not prove serious if he  
has strength after his former  
sickness - There is no doubt that  
it was Booth who killed the  
President - Laura Keane says  
she can testify that it was him

The secessionists  
here have all draped their houses  
in crape - and acknowledge that  
it was the worst thing for the  
South that ever happened - their  
best friend is gone & Andy J -  
will be more severe than ever  
Lincoln was - Andy Johnson  
joined the Temperance Society  
after the Inauguration and  
every one who saw him at his  
own Inauguration were much  
pleased with his manner as he  
seemed impressed with the res-  
ponsibility before him -

There are rumored changes to  
be made in the Cabinet already



There was a strange coincidence at the Theatre Friday evening - In the play the American Cousin won the prize at Archery and on receiving the medal was congratulated - He said he had not done nothing - all it required was a steady eye hand a clear eye - to pull the trigger & the mark was hit" as he said it he looked right up at the President

That was in the play & he looked there merely because he was the principal person present but afterwards it struck everyone as a strange coincidence

On Friday Beck received a letter from Duane who is a prisoner at Point Lookout begging him to forget the Past & to find out for him if he would be allowed to take the oath of allegiance to the U. S. that he

was sick enough of the Confederacy  
and very sorry he had ever  
had any thing to do with it -  
That afternoon Beck went to the  
Court Gen<sup>l</sup> of prisoners but he  
was out - and of course after the  
awful tragedy Beck did not  
feel like interceding for a rebel  
I do not know what he will do  
now - he may go to Gen<sup>l</sup> Grant  
if Hoffman won't do anything  
Don't say anything about it -

I suppose you  
have read all I have told you,  
in the Papers but being there  
myself I supposed you would  
like to hear it over just as I saw  
it - The authorities think that  
there is no chance for the  
assassin to escape but I think  
it is like hunting for a needle  
"in a haystack" - Your letter  
did not come today and when

ever it does not come by <sup>Sunday</sup> Saturday  
it is because you have left it to  
tell the latest news of Adèle and  
when you wrote last she was  
a little troubled with her throat -  
I had a letter from Maggie today

I will send this letter today  
before getting your's - If you send  
me the word how much cloth  
it takes for Adèle's sacque I can  
buy it here or make it if I had

the pattern - I have forgotten  
how wide the material <sup>was</sup> that Mrs  
Foster thought - but if I know the  
length of her sacque or the width  
of the half at the bottom I can  
tell how much it would take when  
I see Mrs Foster about the width  
of the material - We are well &  
send love - with kisses to Adèle -

Your aff dau  
Helen D.W.B.