

# BOOTH LETTER, SUPPRESSED 60 YEARS, BARED

Missive Given to Star by Minnesotan, Copied From  
Confidential Files of U.S., Shows Kidnaping, Not  
Assassination, of Lincoln Was Plan.

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Suppressed for 60 years by the government, a letter written by John Wilkes Booth on the eve of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln is given publication here today almost on the anniversary of the great political tragedy, which falls on Tuesday.

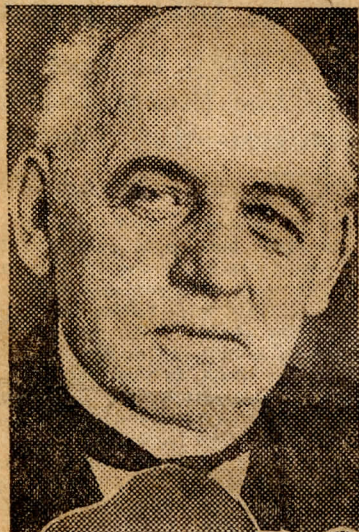
It was revealed for the first time by Col. C. E. Hinton, veteran Minnesota newspaper man, who received a copy of it from the secret service man who copied it from the confidential records of the government. No Washington official will admit knowledge of the existence of the letter today, and it is believed to have been destroyed.

Death of his old comrade a few weeks ago had unsealed the lips of Colonel Hinton.

## Here Is the Copy of the Letter

Here is the letter, copied verbatim even to minor mistakes and incoherency due to the agitation of the arch assassin:

### Man Who Gave Missive to Star; Other Copied It



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 cloud to break, and for the 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 share the bitter, the bitter end.

I have ever held the South was right. The very nomination of Abraham Lincoln four years ago spoke plainly war—war upon Southern rights and institutions. His election proved it.

Await an overt act? Yes, till you are bound and plundered? What folly! The South was wise. Who thinks of arguments of patience when the fingers of an enemy press the trigger?

#### 'Justice Is Spurned'

In a foreign war, I, too, could say, "Country, right or wrong," but in a struggle such as ours, where the brother tries to pierce the brother's heart, for God's sake choose the right.

When a country like this spurns justice from her side, she forfeits allegiance to every honest freeman and should leave him untrammelled by any fealty forever to act as his conscience may approve and justice to the people of the North.

C. E. Hinton (above) is the man who revealed today through The Daily Star that John Wilkes Booth left a letter which was suppressed by the government.

L. S. Sherman (below) is the late secret service agent and head of railroad detectives, who gave Hinton a copy of the letter taken from government records.

To love liberty, to hate tyranny, to strike at wrong and oppression was the teaching of our forefathers. The study of our early history will not let us forget and may it never. This country was formed for the white men, not for the black, and looking upon African slavery from the same standpoint held by the noble framers of our Constitution, I, for one, have ever considered it one of the greatest blessings, both for themselves and us, God ever bestowed on a favored nation.

Witness heretofore our wealth and power; witness their devotion and enlightenment above their race elsewhere. I have lived among it the most of my life and have seen less harsh treatment from master to servant than I have beheld at the North from father to son.

Yet, heaven knows no one would be willing to do more for the colored race than I, could I but see a still better way to better their condition. But Mr. Lincoln's policy is only preparing the way for their total annihilation.

#### 'Vice Becomes Virtue'

The South is not now, nor has it ever been fighting for the continuation of slavery. The first battle (Bull Run) did away with that idea. Its causes since then have been as noble and greater far than those that urged our fathers on. Even should we allow they were wrong at the beginning of the contest, cruelty and injustice have made the wrong become the right and they stand now before the wonder and admiration of the world as a noble band of patriotic heroes. Hereafter reading of their deeds, Thermopylae will be forgotten.

When I aided in the capture of John Brown, who was a murderer on our Western border, and was fairly tried and convicted of treason before an impartial jury, I was proud of my little share in the transaction—deemed I was doing my duty in helping our country to perform an act of justice.

But what was a crime to poor John Brown is now considered by themselves as the greatest and only virtue in the Republican party. Strange transmigration! Vice to become a virtue simply because more indulged in.

#### 'Extermination or Slavery'

I thought then as now the abolitionists were the only traitors in the land and that the whole party deserved fate as poor John Brown; not because they wished to abolish slavery, but on account of the means they have endeavored to effect that abolition. If Brown were living I doubt whether he himself would set slavery against the Union. Most or many in the North do and openly curse the Union if the South is to return and retain a single right guaranteed to them by every tie which was once revered as sacred.

The South can have no choice. It is extermination or slavery for themselves—worse than death to draw from; I know my choice.

I have studied hard to discover upon what grounds the right of a state to secede has been denied.

when our very name, "United States," and the Declaration of Independence both provide for secession.

But this is no time for words. I write in haste. I know how foolish I shall be deemed for undertaking such a step as this—where on one side I have many friends and everything to make me happy; where my profession has gained me an income of more than \$20,000 a year and where my great personal ambition in my profession has such a great field of labor.

#### No Friends in South

On the other hand the South has never bestowed on me one kind word—a place 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 the former for the latter, besides my mother and sisters whom I love so dearly, though they so widely differ from me in opinion, seems insane; but God is my judge.

I have never been upon a battle-field, but oh, my countrymen, if you could see the effects of the horrid war as I have seen them in every state save Virginia, I know you would think like me and would pray the Almighty to create in the Northern mind a sense of justice and right, even though it possesses no seasoning of mercy, that He would dry up this sea of blood between us, which is daily growing wider.

Alas, poor country, is she to meet her threatened doom? Four years! I would give a thousand lives to see her remain as I had always known—powerful and unbroken—and even now I would hold my life as naught to see her as she was. Oh, my friends, if the fearful scenes of the past four years had never been enacted, or if what has been was but a fearful dream from which we now awake, with what overflowing hearts could we bless our God and pray for His continued favors.

How I have loved the old flag can never now be known. A few years ago the entire world could boast of none so pure and spotless, but I have of late been seeing and hearing of bloody deeds of which she has been made the emblem and would shudder to think how changed she has grown.

Oh, how I have longed to break from the midst of blood and death, that circle round her folds, spoiling her beauty and tarnishing her honor; but no, day by day has she been dragged deeper and deeper into cruelty and oppression, till now, in my eyes, her once red stripes seem like bloody gashes in the face of heaven. I look upon my early admiration of her glories as a dream.

My love, as things stand today, is now for the South alone, nor do I deem it a dishonor to attempt to make this man a prisoner to whom she owes so much misery.

If success attends me, I go penitently to her side. They say she has found that "last ditch" which the North has so long desired and been endeavoring to force her in, forgetting they are brothers and it is impolitic to goad an enemy to madness. Should I reach her in safety and find it true, I will proudly beg permission to triumph or die in that "last ditch" by her side.

A Confederate doing duty on his own responsibility.

Sic Semper Tyrannis.

J. WILKES BOOTH.

At the time of the writing Booth expected only to wound the president and kidnap him.

The story of how Colonel Hinton came into possession of the letter is released by the death a few weeks ago of the man who gave it to him.

This man, according to Colonel Hinton, was Lawrence Schoolcraft Sherman, known among his intimates as "Nick," long the chief of the Northern Pacific railroad detective service.

Sherman roomed with Hinton in the early '80's in the old Winter block on Washington avenue here.

He had been in the Pinkerton detective service and had helped to quell the "Molly McGuires" in Pennsylvania. Later he had been in the postal service and other government secret service, according to Hinton.

"Sherman spoke to me one day," said Colonel Hinton, "of a letter he had seen in the government records, a letter which had interested him so much that he made a copy of it. This was the letter he gave me. I copied it myself but was sworn to secrecy in regard to the matter until such time as it would no longer embarrass Sherman, or until his death.

"Although the existence of receipt of such a letter from Wilkes Booth or its discovery in his effects has always been denied by government agents so far as I have learned, the letter rings true to me and has the hysterical tone that might be expected of a man under stress of great emotion or resolve as well as the high-flown quality of the born actor."