

WASHINGTON  
IN LINCOLN'S TIME

BY

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and he was himself a capital story-teller as well as a good smoker; and his cigars were famous for their high quality. Rightly or wrongly, he was popularly regarded as friendly to McClellan, and for that and other reasons was disliked by Mrs. Lincoln, who would have been glad if the President had put Mr. Seward out of the State Department, and put in his place Mr. Sumner, whom she greatly admired.

Once I saw Secretary Seward engaged in a case before the United States Supreme Court. This was probably his only appearance before that tribunal during his term of office in the State Department. It was in the celebrated Albany bridge case, which had been carried over from a period before Mr. Seward's appointment. His manner at that time was not impressive. He spoke with great deliberation; he frequently fumbled with a big red silk handkerchief that lay on the table before him, and occasionally he blew a tremendous blast on his very large nose, as if he were in the habit of taking snuff.

Secretary Stanton was not often seen outside the War Department building. He apparently spent his days and nights in that musty old barrack. His customary position in his office was standing at a high, long desk, facing the principal entrance to the room, and open to all who had the right of audience; for he shunned every semblance of privacy in office. From that awful tribunal, so well remembered by all who had occasion to approach the great War Secretary on matters of public importance, were issued many orders of supreme moment. He

was opinionated, almost immovable in his judgments; yet absolutely just, when not led astray by his impetuous temper, as he was apt to be at times in the prodigious rush of official cares. Unlike nearly all his associates in the cabinet, Stanton was never accused of having any ambitions for a higher place than his own. He lived in handsome style, entertained generously, and was desperately hated by the newspaper men, some of whom appeared to regard him as a fiend incarnate. Certainly, Stanton's terrific earnestness in the prosecution of the war and the maintenance of the discipline of the military service, made him regardless of many of the minor graces of life which might have endeared him to a generation of men who held him in the highest respect for his patriotism, great public services, and wonderful talent for administration. His spectacled face, with full black whiskers grizzled with gray, and a peculiar silvery streak on the chin, is familiar to thousands of Americans who have seen his portrait on the paper currency of the nation.

Lincoln appeared to have not only a great respect for Secretary Stanton's abilities, but a certain diffidence about any attempt to thwart the Secretary in any way. I doubt very much if he ever said — as was reported of him — that he “had no influence with this administration,” the War Department being especially referred to; but I know that he disliked to contradict or interfere with the Secretary if it could be avoided. On more than one occasion, however, the Secretary's iron will had to give way before a decisive order. An amusing, and yet strik-

ing, illustration of the qualities of mind of the President and Secretary was afforded in the case of Captain T. T. Eckert, then superintendent of the military telegraph bureau that had been created in the War Department (and now president of the Western Union Telegraph Company). Captain Eckert was a man of indomitable industry, an incessant worker, and he was so over-burdened with labor that he seldom left his narrow quarters, where he was "cribbed, cabined, and confined" near the War Department building, even for needful rest and sleep. Much to Eckert's amazement and chagrin, Captain Sanford, also attached to the military service as a special officer (and afterward well known as president of an express company), was detailed to take his place as superintendent of the bureau. Captain Sanford was reluctant to displace Captain Eckert, especially as he was not familiar with the practical working of the telegraph. Accordingly, Sanford took occasion to let Eckert know that he was to be relieved "for neglect of duty," by the order of the Secretary of War. An allegation so unjust wounded and surprised the hard-working and harassed officer, who was conscious that he had done his full duty by the government. The upshot of the business was that Captain Eckert, after he had succeeded in sending in his resignation before an order of dismissal could reach him, was permitted to face the War Secretary for the first time since he had been on duty. It appeared that Captain Eckert had originally been ordered to report to General McClellan, and those orders had never been changed or revoked. Stanton had for-

gotten this, or did not know it; and he had charged to the remissness of Captain Eckert's bureau the currency on the streets of Washington of military intelligence, which had really leaked out from McClellan's headquarters. The Secretary learned for the first time, in reply to questions propounded by him with almost brutal sternness, that Captain Eckert's orders required him to report to General McClellan, and not to the Secretary of War, nor even to the President. While this harsh catechism was going on, the tall form of the President appeared in the doorway behind the captain, and Lincoln, lingering for a moment as he entered, heard some portions of the talk. Then, striding forward, he cheerily addressed Eckert (who, by the way, had been appointed from Ohio) with, "How now, my Buckeye friend, what's the trouble here?" When he was told that the captain was on the point of being discharged for neglect of duty, the President expressed his amazement, and said that he had long been in the habit of going to Captain Eckert's office for news from the front, for encouragement and comfort when he was anxious and depressed. He had gone there, he said, at all hours of the day and night,—two o'clock in the day, and two o'clock in the morning, at midday, daybreak, and sunrise,—and he had never found the captain absent from his post of duty; and that he should be guilty of neglect of duty was simply incredible. The grim Secretary relaxed his attitude of stern reproach, and Captain Eckert was directed to return to his post with the rank and pay of major, reporting thereafter to the Secretary and the President. In

due course of time, Major Eckert was appointed Assistant Secretary of War, and before he resigned his commission at the close of the war, he bore the rank and title of brevet brigadier-general. It was this faithful officer, by the way, who was chosen to carry to the Confederate commissioners at Hampton Roads, later in the war, the President's reply to their appeal, before the President made up his mind, at Grant's suggestion, to go there in person. Lincoln's arrival on the scene when the captain was "having it out" with the headstrong Secretary was in the nature of a special providence.

Captain Gustavus V. Fox, a man cast in the mold of the indefatigable Secretary of War, but agreeably affable and winning in his manner, was the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and its informing spirit. Once the President requested me to go to the Navy Department, and see what could be done for a young friend of mine who had been in the army, and who desired to get into the navy, in order to keep his promise not to go back into the military service. And as I was discussing the ways and means, the President said, "Here, take this card to Captain Fox; *he* is the Navy Department." Captain Fox, although a hard worker, was rotund and rosy, the very picture of a good liver who took life easy. But he was capable of performing prodigious feats of labor, and he was a complete encyclopedia of facts and figures relating to the naval service and its collateral branches, and was ready to take up and dispose of any of the multitudinous details of the Navy Department at a moment's notice. He was a marvelously self-poised

and ready man; he was the life and soul of the department.

Secretary Welles was not readily accessible to anybody, civilian or military, and his gentle and courteous manner, when he was reached, was rather disappointing to the visitor. He appeared to be vague and shadowy. One energetic and business-like senator (Commiss of California) was wont to declare that the Secretary did not have a tangible shape, and that one's arm could sweep through his form. It is hardly necessary to add that the Secretary of the Navy was disliked by the newspaper people, and that he suffered accordingly. One of the craft fancied that he saw in Mr. Welles's face and profile a likeness to the ill-fated consort of Louis XVI., as she is painted by one of the Düsseldorf artists, on her way to execution. And "Marie Antoinette" the Secretary was called by the irreverent newspaper men, who had a nickname for every public man.

President Lincoln dearly loved a good story at the expense of any one of the dignitaries of the time, and he was accustomed to relate with much amusement a tale that was told of the Secretary of the Navy by one of the humorous scribes brought forth by the literary opportunities of the war—"Orpheus C. Kerr." The story ran that a dying sailor in one of the Washington hospitals said he was ready to go if he could see his old grandmother at home before he died; and the attendant at his bedside, being directed to ask Secretary Welles if he would personate that relative, the Secretary replied that he would do it with pleasure—but he

now made welcome and was given a pension and a post in one of the royal palaces near Vienna. It was subsequently reported that this American princess joined herself to the French forces under the Geneva cross, in the Franco-Prussian war, and that her husband was killed while fighting on the same side at the battle of Gravelotte.

During the war the proportion of civilians to those who wore the trappings of the army and navy was so small that men felt it almost a distinction to wear the ordinary evening dress. An order from the War Department forbidding military officers to come to Washington without leave did not by any means abate what was felt to be a great nuisance. Too many officers haunted the lobbies of the Capitol in search of political aid to secure for them the promotions that they desired, or the passage of bills in which military or naval officers had special interest. I saw a curious example of military absenteeism one night at Ford's Theater, where I had accompanied the President to see Edwin Booth in "The Merchant of Venice." The President had sent word late in the afternoon that he would like to have a box for himself and a friend; but when we arrived at the theater, going in by the stage entrance, we were met by the manager, who said that the boxes had all been taken before the President's message had been received, but he would use his efforts with a party of officers, as soon as they arrived, to induce them to give up a box which they had engaged. While he was speaking, an usher came behind the scenes, and said that the officers had very willingly relinquished their box for the pleasure of the President. Between

the acts the manager came to pay his respects to the President, and to inquire for his comfort, and Lincoln asked for the names of the military gentlemen who had so kindly given up their evening's entertainment in his behalf. The manager replied that he did not know, but he afterward quietly told me that he knew that one half of the number were officers absent from the army without leave, and that they considered it a good joke that they could escape the President's observation at the cost of relinquishing their box at the theater. The manager shrewdly guessed that the President had asked for their names in order to discover if they were in Washington on leave; but that was not Lincoln's way.

President Lincoln's theater-going was usually confined to occasions when Shakspeare's plays were enacted; for, although he enjoyed a hearty laugh, he was better pleased with the stately dignity, deep philosophy, and exalted poetry of Shakspeare than with anything that was to be found in more modern dramatic writings. But I remember a delightful evening that we once spent at the old Washington Theater, where we saw Mrs. John Wood in John Brougham's travesty of "Pocahontas." The delicious absurdity and crackling puns of the piece gave the President food for mirth for many days thereafter. At another time we saw Edwin Forrest in "King Lear," and the President appeared to be more impressed by the acting of John McCullough, in the role of *Edgar*, than with the great tragedian's appearance as the mad king. He asked that McCullough might come to the box between the acts; and when the young actor was brought to the door, clad

in his fantastic garb of rags and straw, Mr. Lincoln warmly, and yet with diffidence, praised the performance of the scene in which he had just appeared.

It was Mr. Lincoln's delight to sally forth in the darkness, on foot, and, accompanied only by a friend, to visit some theater to which notice of his coming had been sent only just before his setting out. When we consider that it was popularly believed that Washington at that time was infested with spies and midnight assassins, we may well wonder at his temerity. But perhaps it was the unexpectedness and lack of advertisement of his movements that may have induced him to undertake these little excursions. It was the wide publicity given to his intention to go to the play that wrought his own undoing in 1865. Those who are disposed to consider that Lincoln exhibited a frivolous side of his character by his play-going should reflect that the theater was almost the only place where he could escape from the clamor of office-seekers, and for a moment unfix his thoughts from the cares and anxieties that weighed upon his spirit with dreadful oppressiveness. Official etiquette forbids the President of the United States the social pleasures outside of his house which a less exalted functionary or a private citizen may enjoy. In Lincoln's case, more than in that of any other who has held the presidential office, there was abundant justification of his seeking for opportunities to escape from the stately prison-house of the official residence.

#### PUBLIC EXERCISES AT THE CAPITOL

ONE of the most charming figures in semi-public life in Washington during the war was Miss Anna Dickinson, then in the first flush of her success as an eloquent speaker. Her first appearance in January, 1864, was a grand triumph for a young woman just beginning her long and picturesque career. She was invited by a host of distinguished men (at the head of the list being Vice-President Hamlin and Speaker Colfax) to address the people in the Hall of Representatives. The great room was crowded, and the house never looked gayer than it did that evening, bright as it was with the velvets, flowers, and brilliant colors of a great company of society women. Miss Dickinson was accompanied to the platform by the Vice-President and the Speaker, and was introduced by the former, who likened her to Joan of Arc. Dressed in black silk, with a touch of color at her throat, her wavy black hair in short redundant curls, Anna Dickinson made a figure long to be remembered as she slowly paced to and fro on the platform, dropping her well-formed and compact sentences upon the people below. Lincoln was present, and incidentally the fair orator introduced a striking and encomiastic allusion to the chief magistrate, and the vast audience applauded with tremendous enthusiasm. In the following March, however, the lady changed her mind, as ladies may, and in a speech delivered at Grover's Theater "raked the Lincoln administration fore and aft." But later on she experienced

year should be definitely ascertained. Accordingly, on this day, which was November 9, President Lincoln dictated a despatch, the terms of which were as follows: "With returns and States of which we are confident, the reelection of the President is considered certain, while it is not certain that McClellan has carried any State, though the chances are that he has carried New Jersey and Kentucky." When I had written the despatch at the President's dictation, I passed it to him for his signature; but he declined to "blow his own horn," as he expressed it, and said: "You sign the message, and I will send it." A day or two later, when Delaware, whose vote had been uncertain, declared for McClellan, Lincoln sent a second despatch in order to give his friend on the far-off Pacific coast a clear and exact idea of what had happened, explaining that he took it for granted that Dr. Henry would hear all the news, but might think it odd that the President should leave him without clearing up the situation thus left somewhat undecided in the uncertainties of the election returns.

On the day mentioned, Lincoln narrated an incident the particulars of which I wrote out and printed directly after. These are his own words, as nearly as they could then be recalled: "It was just after my election in 1860, when the news had been coming in thick and fast all day and there had been a great 'hurrah, boys,' so that I was well tired out, and went home to rest, throwing myself down on a lounge in my chamber. Opposite where I lay was a bureau with a swinging glass upon it" (and here he got up and placed furniture to illus-

trate the position), "and looking in that glass I saw myself reflected nearly at full length; but my face, I noticed, had *two* separate and distinct images, the tip of the nose of one being about three inches from the tip of the other. I was a little bothered, perhaps startled, and got up and looked in the glass, but the illusion vanished. On lying down again, I saw it a second time, plainer, if possible, than before; and then I noticed that one of the faces was a little paler—say five shades—than the other. I got up, and the thing melted away, and I went off, and in the excitement of the hour forgot all about it—nearly, but not quite, for the thing would once in a while come up, and give me a little pang as if something uncomfortable had happened. When I went home again that night I told my wife about it, and a few days afterward I made the experiment again, when" (with a laugh), "sure enough! the thing came again; but I never succeeded in bringing the ghost back after that, though I once tried very industriously to show it to my wife, who was somewhat worried about it. She thought it was a 'sign' that I was to be elected to a second term of office, and that the paleness of one of the faces was an omen that I should not see life through the last term." This is a very remarkable story—a coincidence, we may say, to which some significance was given by the cruel death of the President soon after the beginning of his second term. I told Mrs. Lincoln the story, and asked her if she remembered its details. She expressed surprise that Mr. Lincoln was willing to say anything about it, as he had up to that time refrained from

mentioning the incident to anybody; and as she was firm in her belief that the optical illusion (which it certainly was) was a warning, I never again referred to the subject to either the President or his wife. Subsequently, Lincoln's version of the story was confirmed by Private Secretary John Hay, who, however, was of the opinion that the illusion had been seen on the day of Lincoln's first nomination, and not, as I have said, on the day of his first election. Commenting on the result of the election of the day before, Lincoln said, with great solemnity: "I should be the veriest shallow and self-conceited blockhead upon the footstool, if in my discharge of the duties that are put upon me in this place, I should hope to get along without the wisdom that comes from God, and not from men."

On the night of November 10 an impromptu procession, gay with banners and resplendent with lanterns and transparencies, marched up to the White House, and a vast crowd surged around the main entrance, filling the entire space within the grounds as far as the eye could reach from the house. Martial music, the cheers of people, and the roar of cannon, shook the sky. Tad, who was flying around from window to window arranging a small illumination on his own private account, was delighted and excited by the occasional shivering of the large panes of glass by the concussion of the air produced when the cannon in the driveway went off with tremendous noise. The President wrote out his little speech, and his appearance at "the historic window" over the doorway in the portico was the

signal for the maddest cheers from the crowd, and it was many minutes before the deafening racket permitted him to speak. The same procession marched around to the houses of some of the members of the cabinet, among others to that of Secretary Seward, who had returned from his visit to New York.

The Secretary of State was in an exceedingly jocose frame of mind, and after congratulating the crowd on the result of the election, made a funny speech substantially as follows: "I advise you to go and see Mr. Fessenden, for if he gets discouraged we shall all come to grief; also be good enough to poke up Mr. Stanton; he needs poking up, for he has been seriously sick, I hear, for several days past. You cannot do better also than to call upon my excellent friend Gideon Welles, and ask him if he cannot make the blockade off Wilmington more stringent, so that I shall not need to have so much trouble with my foreign relations." To say that the crowd was delighted with this comical little speech is faintly to describe the frame of mind in which the Secretary's jocose remarks were received.

#### THE PRESIDENT'S SHREWDNESS AT HAMPTON ROADS

GREAT was the excitement in Washington when, at the close of the next January (1865), it was noised abroad that negotiations looking for peace were to be opened between the Federal administration and the rebel president. Francis P. Blair, Sr., had returned from the second of his fruitless missions to



Richmond, bringing to the President the information that Jefferson Davis was "ready to enter into conference with a view to secure peace to the two countries." The general tenor of Blair's verbal account of what he saw and heard in Richmond, more than anything else, perhaps, encouraged Mr. Lincoln in the belief that peace might be obtained by negotiation, and the Union be restored upon terms which would be acceptable to the country. I say "perhaps," because there is probably no living man who knew exactly what was Mr. Lincoln's opinion concerning the possibility of securing terms of peace at that time on any basis that would be acceptable to himself and to the whole country. But in any case we may be sure that he determined to exhaust all the means within his reach to satisfy the country whether peace with honor could or could not be obtained by negotiation. My own belief then (which was strengthened by one or two conversations with Mr. Lincoln) was that after the failure of the Niagara Falls conference in July, 1864, he had no faith whatever in any proposition pretending to look in the direction of peace which might come from the Confederate authorities.

But when it was found that not only had Secretary Seward gone to Hampton Roads to meet the so-called rebel commissioners, Stephens, Campbell, and Hunter, but that the President of the United States had actually followed him, the perturbation in Washington was something which cannot be readily described. The Peace Democrats went about the corridors of the hotels and the Capitol, saying that Lincoln had at last come to their way of thinking,

and had gone to Hampton Roads to open peace negotiations. The radicals were in a fury of rage. They bitterly complained that the President was about to give up the political fruits which had been already gathered from the long and exhausting military struggle. It was asserted that the policy of confiscation and emancipation was to be abandoned, and that as a further concession to the "returning prodigal," the abolition of slavery by the action of States that had not yet voted was to be blocked then and there. There were, however, not a few moderate, and I may say conservative, Republicans whose faith in the sagacity and patriotism of Abraham Lincoln still remained unshaken; but these were in a minority, and it was apparently with feeble hope that they admonished radical Republicans and Copperhead Democrats to wait until Lincoln had returned from Hampton Roads and was ready to tell his story. Among the bitterest to denounce the course of Lincoln was Thaddeus Stevens, who, a few days before, had said in his place in the House of Representatives that if the country were to vote over again for President of the United States, Benjamin F. Butler, and not Abraham Lincoln, would be their choice. Others of the same uncompromising and unreasonable stripe actually hinted at impeachment and trial. Colonel John W. Forney unwittingly added fuel to the flames by publishing in the "Washington Chronicle" a series of editorial articles ablaze with all the clap-trap of double leads and typographical device, in which it was sought to prepare the public mind for the sacrifice of something vaguely dreadful and dreadfully

vague. These articles counseled popular acquiescence in the repeal of the confiscation law and other kindred measures as a condition of peace, and were telegraphed all over the country, and indorsed by thoughtless men as the outgivings of President Lincoln. They were read by astonished and indignant thousands, were flouted and scouted by the followers of Wade and Davis, and they filled with alarm and dejection the minds of multitudes of readers not conversant with the facts. It must be remembered that, the war upon President Lincoln for his alleged slowness in regard to the slavery question having no longer that excuse for being, the ultra-radicals had flown to negro suffrage and a more vigorous system of retaliation upon rebel prisoners as convenient weapons in a new aggressiveness; and when it was confidently stated that Lincoln had gone to Hampton Roads because he feared that Seward would not make his terms "liberal enough," the excitement in and around the Capitol rose to fever heat.

When the President and the Secretary of State returned to Washington after their conference on board the steamer *River Queen* at Hampton Roads, the tenseness of political feeling in Congress was slightly relaxed. The radicals grudgingly admitted that Lincoln and Seward had not yet compromised away the substantial fruits of four years of war and legislation. But with common consent everybody agreed that the President must at once enlighten Congress as to the doings of himself and Secretary Seward and the rebel commissioners at Hampton Roads. On February 8 culminated a

long and acrimonious quarrel which had been brewing in the Senate between some of the conservative and radical members of that body. Sumner introduced a resolution calling on the President for information concerning the Hampton Roads conference. To this Senator Doolittle of Wisconsin objected. He urged that such a request, at such a time, was an indirect censure of the President, and would be construed as a senatorial demand for him to give an account of himself. Mr. Doolittle was somewhat anxious to be regarded as the special champion of Lincoln and his administration. Sumner made a thrust at Doolittle, saying that the Wisconsin senator had made that speech before in the Senate, and that he [Sumner] would caution him not to "jump before he got to the stile." Irritated by this and other gibes at his alleged super-serviceableness, Doolittle replied that he classed Senator Powell of Kentucky and Senator Wade of Ohio together; for although, as he said, they were acting from different motives, they were attempting a common aim. Both, he said, were opposed to the readmission of the States lately in rebellion where the Federal authority had been partially restored—Louisiana at that time being the bone of contention. Senator Wade soon got the floor, and replied to Doolittle's speech with great bitterness, losing his temper, and referring to Doolittle's position as "poor, mean, miserable, and demagogical." He frankly said that he bore the senator from Wisconsin "no malice and very little good will," and he added that the President was certainly in a bad way if he was reduced to having "such a poor

The army of Grant had been enveloping Petersburg on March 28 and 29, and about ten o'clock on the morning of April 3 word was received in Washington from President Lincoln at City Point that that city had been evacuated, and that our army was pushing into it, sweeping around it, and pursuing the flying squadrons of Lee. At a quarter to eleven in that forenoon came a despatch to the War Department from General Weitzel, dated at Richmond, announcing the fall of the Confederate capital. It was not many minutes before the news spread like wildfire through Washington, and the intelligence, at first doubted, was speedily made certain by the circulation of thousands of newspaper "extras" containing the news in bulletins issued from the War Department. In a moment of time the city was ablaze with an excitement the like of which was never seen before; and everybody who had a piece of bunting spread it to the breeze; from one end of Pennsylvania Avenue to the other the air seemed to burn with the bright hues of the flag. The sky was shaken by a grand salute of 800 guns, fired by order of the Secretary of War—300 for Petersburg and 500 for Richmond. Almost by magic the streets were crowded with hosts of people, talking, laughing, hurraing, and shouting in the fullness of their joy. Men embraced one another, "treated" one another, made up old quarrels, renewed old friendships, marched through the streets arm in arm, singing and chatting in that happy sort of abandon which characterizes our people when under the influence of a great and universal happiness. The atmosphere

was full of the intoxication of joy. The departments of the Government and many stores and private offices were closed for the day, and hosts of hard-worked clerks had their full share of the general holiday. Bands of music, apparently without any special direction or formal call, paraded the streets, and boomed and blared from every public place, until the air was resonant with the expression of the popular jubilation in all the national airs, not forgetting "Dixie," which, it will be remembered, President Lincoln afterward declared to be among the spoils of war.

The American habit of speech-making was never before so conspicuously exemplified. Wherever any man was found who could make a speech, or who thought he could make a speech, there a speech was made; and a great many men who had never before made one found themselves thrust upon a crowd of enthusiastic sovereigns who demanded of them something by way of jubilant oratory. One of the best of those offhand addresses extorted by the enthusiastic crowds was that of Secretary Stanton, who was called upon at the War Department by an eager multitude clamorous for more details and for a speech. The great War Secretary, for once in his life so overcome by emotion that he could not speak continuously, said this:

Friends and fellow-citizens: In this great hour of triumph my heart, as well as yours, is penetrated with gratitude to Almighty God for his deliverance of the nation. Our thanks are due to the President, to the army and

navy, to the great commanders by sea and land, to the gallant officers and men who have periled their lives upon the battle-field, and drenched the soil with their blood. Henceforth all commiseration and aid should be given to the wounded, the maimed, and the suffering, who bear the marks of their great sacrifices in the mighty struggle. Let us humbly offer up our thanks to divine Providence for his care over us, and beseech him to guide and govern us in our duties hereafter, as he has carried us forward to victory; to teach us how to be humble in the midst of triumph, how to be just in the hour of victory, and to help us secure the foundations of this republic, soaked as they have been in blood, so that it shall live for ever and ever. Let us not forget the laboring millions in other lands, who in this struggle have given us their sympathies, their aid, and their prayers; and let us bid them rejoice with us in our great triumph. Then, having done this, let us trust the future to him who will guide us as heretofore, according to his own good will.

Nearly every line of this address was punctuated with applause.

The Secretary then read Grant's despatch, announcing the capture of Richmond, and the fact that the city was on fire, upon which the Secretary asked the crowd what they would reply to Grant. Some cried, "Let her burn!" others, "Burn it! burn it!" but one voice shouted, "Hold Richmond for the Northern mudsills!" which sally was received with considerable laughter. Mr. Stanton introduced to the crowd Willie Kettles, a bright-faced Vermont boy about fourteen years old, an operator in the telegraph room of the War Office, who had been the lucky recipient of the important despatch announcing the capture of Richmond.

Of course the crowd wanted a speech from the lad, who discreetly held his tongue, and bowed with modesty. Secretary Seward, who happened to be at the War Department to hear the news, was espied and called out, and he made a little address in which he said that he had always been in favor of a change in the cabinet, particularly in the War Department, and that recent events proved that he was right. "Why," said he, "I started to go to 'the front' the other day, and when I got to City Point they told me it was at Hatcher's Run, and when I got there I was told it was not there but somewhere else, and when I get back I am told by the Secretary that it is at Petersburg; but before I can realize that, I am told again that it is at Richmond, and west of that. Now I leave you to judge what I ought to think of such a Secretary of War as this." The crowds continually circulated through the city, and from a building near the War Department Senator Nye of Nevada and Preston King of New York spoke, and at Willard's Hotel General Butler, Green Clay Smith of Kentucky, and Vice-President Johnson responded to the eager and uproarious demand. The day of jubilee did not end with the day, but rejoicing and cheering were prolonged far into the night. Many illuminated their houses, and bands were still playing, and leading men and public officials were serenaded all over the city. There are always hosts of people who drown their joys effectually in the flowing bowl, and Washington on April 3 was full of them. Thousands besieged the drinking-saloons, champagne popped everywhere, and a more liquorish

the fowl by hatching the egg than smashing it." But it turned out that Senator Sumner, for one, was no better pleased with this metaphor than he had been with others on previous occasions; for in a letter to Dr. Lieber of Philadelphia, next day, he wrote: "The President's speech, and other things, augur confusion and uncertainty in the future, with hot controversy. Alas! alas!" And still later in that year Sumner said: "The eggs of crocodiles can produce only crocodiles, and it is not easy to see how eggs laid by military power can be hatched into an American State."

Years have passed since then, and the grave has long since closed over the President and the senators who opposed his policy and his judgment. Posterity has vindicated the wisdom of Lincoln, and has dealt charitably with the errors of those who in their day lacked that charity which is now entreated of mankind for them. That they meant well, that they were patriotic, that they were sincere, no man can doubt; but as we turn our thoughts backward to that April night when the great President made his last public speech to a silent and wondering crowd, we may well regard his figure with veneration and reverence, aware now, if we were not then, that he builded better than they knew. In the general jubilation of that hour, however, there was very little criticism of the President's last public speech. It was felt, perhaps, that the man who had brought us safe through the great trial of our strength and patience, himself strong and patient, might well be trusted with the adjustment of terms of reunion.

Reunion was then the foremost thought in the minds of men. Slavery was dead, peace had returned, and henceforth the grateful task of reuniting the long-estranged brotherhood of the States was ours. Is it any wonder that men fairly cried with joy when the certainty of this happy consummation rose in their minds?

But even while we stood under the light of a new day, joyful as a people, triumphant as citizens, there was preparing for us a portentous and inconceivable disaster.

#### THE GREAT TRAGEDY

THE afternoon and evening of April 14, 1865, were cold, raw, and gusty. Dark clouds enveloped the capital, and the air was chilly with occasional showers. Late in the afternoon I filled an appointment by calling on the President at the White House, and was told by him that he "had had a notion" of sending for me to go to the theater that evening with him and Mrs. Lincoln; but he added that Mrs. Lincoln had already made up a party to take the place of General and Mrs. Grant, who had somewhat unexpectedly left the city for Burlington, New Jersey. The party was originally planned for the purpose of taking General and Mrs. Grant to see "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theater, and when Grant had decided to leave Washington, he (the President) had "felt inclined to give up the whole thing"; but as it had been announced in the morning papers that this distinguished party would go to the theater that night, Mrs. Lincoln

had rather insisted that they ought to go, in order that the expectant public should not be wholly disappointed. On my way home I met Schuyler Colfax, who was about leaving for California, and who tarried with me on the sidewalk a little while, talking about the trip, and the people whom I knew in San Francisco and Sacramento and whom he wished to meet. Mr. Lincoln had often talked with me about the possibilities of his eventually taking up his residence in California after his term of office should be over. He thought, he said, that that country would afford better opportunities for his two boys than any of the older States; and when he heard that Colfax was going to California, he was greatly interested in his trip, and said that he hoped that Colfax would bring him back a good report of what his keen and practised observation would note in the country which he (Colfax) was about to see for the first time.

The evening being inclement, I stayed within doors to nurse a violent cold with which I was afflicted; and my room-mate McA— and I whiled away the time chatting and playing cards. About half-past ten our attention was attracted to the frequent galloping of cavalry, or the mounted patrol, past the house which we occupied on New York Avenue, near the State Department building. After a while quiet was restored, and we retired to our sleeping-room in the rear part of the house. As I turned down the gas, I said to my room-mate: "Will, I have guessed the cause of the clatter outside to-night. You know Wade Hampton has disappeared with his cavalry somewhere in the

mountains of Virginia. Now, my theory of the racket is that he has raided Washington, and has pounced down upon the President, and has attempted to carry him off." Of course this was said jocosely and without the slightest thought that the President was in any way in danger; and my friend, in a similar spirit, banteringly replied, "What good will that do the rebs unless they carry off Andy Johnson also?" The next morning I was awakened in the early dawn by a loud and hurried knocking on my chamber door, and the voice of Mr. Gardner, the landlord, crying, "Wake, wake, Mr. Brooks! I have dreadful news." I slipped out, turned the key of the door, and Mr. Gardner came in, pale, trembling, and woebegone, like him who "drew Priam's curtain at the dead of night," and told his awful story. At that time it was believed that the President, Mr. Seward, Vice-President Johnson, and other members of the Government, had been killed; and this was the burden of the tale that was told to us. I sank back into my bed, cold and shivering with horror, and for a time it seemed as though the end of all things had come. I was aroused by the loud weeping of my comrade, who had not left his bed in another part of the room.

When we had sufficiently collected ourselves to dress and go out of doors in the bleak and cheerless April morning, we found in the streets an extraordinary spectacle. They were suddenly crowded with people—men, women, and children thronging the pavements and darkening the thoroughfares. It seemed as if everybody was in tears. Pale faces, streaming eyes, with now and again an angry,

frowning countenance, were on every side. Men and women who were strangers accosted one another with distressed looks and tearful inquiries for the welfare of the President and Mr. Seward's family. The President still lived, but at half-past seven o'clock in the morning the tolling of the bells announced to the lamenting people that he had ceased to breathe. His great and loving heart was still. The last official bulletin from the War Department stated that he died at twenty-two minutes past seven o'clock on the morning of April 15.

Instantly flags were raised at half-mast all over the city, the bells tolled solemnly, and with incredible swiftness Washington went into deep, universal mourning. All shops, government departments, and private offices were closed, and everywhere, on the most pretentious residences and on the humblest hovels, were the black badges of grief. Nature seemed to sympathize in the general lamentation, and tears of rain fell from the moist and somber sky. The wind sighed mournfully through streets crowded with sad-faced people, and broad folds of funeral drapery flapped heavily in the wind over the decorations of the day before. Wandering aimlessly up F street toward Ford's Theater, we met a tragical procession. It was headed by a group of army officers walking bareheaded, and behind them, carried tenderly by a company of soldiers, was the bier of the dead President, covered with the flag of the Union, and accompanied by an escort of soldiers who had been on duty at the house where Lincoln died. As the little cortège passed down the street to the White House, every head was un-

covered, and the profound silence which prevailed was broken only by sobs and by the sound of the measured tread of those who bore the martyred President back to the home which he had so lately quitted full of life, hope, and cheer.

On the night of the 17th the remains of Lincoln were laid in the casket prepared for their reception, and were taken from the large guest-chamber of the house to the famous East Room, where so many brilliant receptions and so many important public events had been witnessed; and there they lay in state until the day of the funeral (April 19). The great room was draped with crape and black cloth, relieved only here and there by white flowers and green leaves. The catafalque upon which the casket lay was about fifteen feet high, and consisted of an elevated platform resting on a dais and covered with a domed canopy of black cloth which was supported by four pillars, and was lined beneath with fluted white silk. In those days the custom of sending "floral tributes" on funereal occasions was not common, but the funeral of Lincoln was remarkable for the unusual abundance and beauty of the devices in flowers that were sent by individuals and public bodies. From the time the body had been made ready for burial until the last services in the house, it was watched night and day by a guard of honor, the members of which were one major-general, one brigadier-general, two field officers, and four line officers of the army and four of the navy. Before the public were admitted to view the face of the dead, the scene in the darkened room—a sort of *chapelle ardente*—was most im-

While this solemn pageant was passing, I was allowed to go alone up the winding stairs that lead to the top of the great dome of the Capitol. Looking down from that lofty point, the sight was weird and memorable. Directly beneath me lay the casket in which the dead President lay at full length, far, far below; and, like black atoms moving over a sheet of gray paper, the slow-moving mourners, seen from a perpendicular above them, crept silently in two dark lines across the pavement of the rotunda, forming an ellipse around the coffin and joining as they advanced toward the eastern portal and disappeared. When the lying in state at the Capitol was over, the funeral procession from Washington to Springfield, Illinois, began, the cortège passing over the same route which was taken by Abraham Lincoln when he left his home for the national capital to assume the great office which he laid down only with his life.

It would be superfluous now to dwell on the incidents of that historic and most lamentable procession, or to recall to the minds of the present and passing generation the impressiveness of the wonderful popular demonstration of grief that stretched from the seaboard to the heart of Illinois. History has recorded how thousands of the plain people whom Lincoln loved came out from their homes to stand bareheaded and reverent as the funeral train swept by, while bells were tolled and the westward progress through the night was marked by campfires built along the course by which the great emancipator was borne at last to his dreamless rest.

## THE DOOM OF THE CONSPIRATORS

THE court-room in which were tried in May, 1865, the eight conspirators arraigned for being concerned in the plot against the lives of the heads of the Government, was a place of fascinating and perhaps morbid interest. The trial was arranged to be secret, but it was finally opened to those who could procure passes from the president of the court. The room in which the trial was held is a part of the great United States Arsenal establishment, attached to which is the penitentiary in which the conspirators were confined. It is on the banks of the Potomac, in the suburbs of the city. Entering an old-fashioned brick building, one was shown into a large, bare room on the ground floor, where sat a couple of staff-officers receiving the credentials of those who applied for admission; they sent these up to the court, where an officer inspected them, and returned them, if satisfactory, with the desired card of admission. A narrow flight of stairs brought the visitor to a small chamber in the second story, where a knot of orderlies were lounging about, and an officer inspected one's pass; after another flight of stairs, another inspection of the pass permitted one to enter the court-room, which was in the third story. It was an apartment about twenty-five feet wide and thirty feet long, the entrance being at the end opposite the penitentiary. Looking into the room, one saw that it was divided lengthwise into two parts, the portion on the right being occupied by the court, sitting around a long, green-covered table, General Hunter at one end,



and Judge-Advocate-General Holt with his assistants at the other. The part of the room which was not occupied by the court was railed off, and was taken up with a few seats for reporters and spectators generally, who were crowded confusedly about, and rested as best they could against the bare, whitewashed walls of the room. At the farther end of the apartment was a wooden railing, behind which, on a narrow, raised platform, sat the accused men, all in a solemn row, with an armed soldier sitting between every two persons. At the left-hand corner behind them was a heavy iron door opening into the corridor along which were the cells of the prisoners. Each one of the accused was manacled hand and foot, and sat grimly against the wall, facing the court and the witnesses, the witness-stand being a raised box in the center of the room.

On the left, in the line of prisoners, sat Mrs. Surratt, deeply veiled, with her face turned to the wall, slowly and constantly fanning herself, and never raising her head except when ordered to show her countenance for the purpose of identification by witnesses. She was a dark-looking, fleshy, placid, and matronly woman, apparently about forty-five years of age. She was accused of being privy to the plot, assisting both before and after the assassination, and secreting in her house the arms and other implements to be used in carrying out the conspiracy.

Next to the guard who sat by Mrs. Surratt's side was Herold, a small, dark man, about twenty-five years old, with a low, receding forehead, scanty black hair and whiskers, a stooping figure, protrud-

ing teeth, and a vulgar face. This man was Booth's intimate companion, and left him only when he was burned out in the Maryland barn.

Next was Payne, the assassin detailed for the murder of Seward. He sat bolt upright against the wall, looming up like a young giant above all the others. Payne's face would defy the ordinary physiognomist. It certainly appeared to be a good face. His coarse, black hair was brushed well off his low, broad forehead; his eyes were dark gray, unusually large and liquid. His brawny, muscular chest, which was covered only by a dark, close-fitting "sweater," was that of an athlete. He was apparently not much over twenty-four years old, and his face, figure, and bearing bespoke him the powerful, resolute creature that he proved to be. It was curious to see the quick flash of intelligence that involuntarily shot from his eyes when the knife with which he had done the bloody work at Seward's house was identified by the man who found it in the street near the house in the gray dawn of the morning after that dreadful night. The knife was a heavy, horn-handled implement, with a double edge at the point, and a blade about ten inches long, thick at the back, but evidently ground carefully to a fine point. This knife was subsequently given to Robinson, the faithful nurse who saved the life of Seward, and who was afterward made a paymaster in the army of the United States.

Next in order sat Atzerot, who had been assigned, it was believed, to the murder of Vice-President Johnson, but whose heart failed him when the time came to strike the blow. This fellow might safely

challenge the rest of the party as the completest personification of a low and cunning scoundrel. He was small and sinewy, with long, dark-brown hair, dark-blue and unsteady eyes, a receding, narrow chin and forehead, and a generally villainous countenance. It was observed that when any ludicrous incident disturbed the gravity of the court, as sometimes happened, Atzerot was the only man who never smiled, although the others, Payne especially, would often grin in sympathy with the auditors.

O'Laughlin, who was supposed to have been set apart for the murder of Stanton or Grant, had the appearance of the traditional stage villain. He had a high, broad forehead, a mass of tangled black hair, a heavy black mustache and chin-whiskers, and his face was blackened by a rough, unshaven beard. His large eyes, black and wild, were never still, but appeared to take in everything within the room, scanning each new arrival at the door, watching the witnesses, but occasionally resting on the green trees and sunny sky seen through the grated window on his left. He often moved his feet, and the clanking of his manacles would attract his attention; he would look down, then back and forth at the scene within the court-room. A Californian vigilance committee in 1849 probably would have hanged him "on general principles." He was accused of being in league with both Surratt and Herold, and was seen at Stanton's house on the night of the murder, asking for General Grant.

Spangler, the stage-carpenter of Ford's Theater, was about forty, heavily built, sandy in complexion,

slovenly in appearance. He held Booth's horse at odd times, kept clear the way to the rear of the theater, and was suspected of being his lackey. The poor creature, more than any other, appeared to be under the influence of imminent bodily fear. His hands were incessantly moving along his legs from knee to thigh, his bony fingers traveling back and forth like spiders, as he sat with his eyes fixed on each witness.

Dr. Mudd, the companion and associate of Booth, who received the flying assassin into his house on the night of the murder, and set his fractured limb, in appearance was about thirty-five years of age, and had mild blue eyes, a good, broad forehead, ruddy face, hair scanty and thin, a high head, and a sanguine temperament. He sat in his shirt-sleeves, with a white handkerchief knotted loosely about his neck, and attentively regarded the proceedings with the air of a man who felt sure of himself.

Last in the row, and looking out of the window upon the pleasant sky and tree-tops beyond, was Arnold, the "Sam" of Booth's correspondence, who, writing from Hookstown, Maryland, informed the assassin that he had concluded to "give up the job," and was tired of keeping up appearances. This man was as uneasy as a caged whelp. He leaned his head on the rail before him, or looked out of the window, or lounged against the wall, or rested his chin on his breast, and generally was absolutely inattentive to everything that went on. He had retreated from the conspiracy, and was caught at Fort Monroe, where he had gone to get

out of the way until suspicion had passed. It then appeared that he figured only in the original plan of abducting Lincoln, and was to have caught him on the stage when the rest of the villains had thrown him over from the box.

The appearance and demeanor of the court, it must be admitted, were neither solemn nor impressive. The members of the commission sat about in various negligent attitudes, and a general appearance of disorder was evident. Many ladies were present, and their irrepressible whispering was a continual nuisance to the reporters, who desired to keep track of the evidence. The witnesses were first examined by the judge-advocate, the members of the court putting in a question now and then, and the counsel for the prisoners taking up the cross-examination, each counselor attending only to the witness whose testimony affected his own client. The witnesses were brought in without regard to any particular criminal, all being tried at once. Occasionally an attorney for one prisoner would "develop" the witness under examination in such a manner as to injure the cause of another of the defendants, and then a petty quarrel would ensue between the different counsel.

Of the eight prisoners at the bar, Payne, Atzerot, Herold, and Mrs. Surratt were declared by the court guilty of murder, and were hanged on July 7, 1865. O'Laughlin, Arnold, and Dr. Mudd were found guilty of being accessory to the conspiracy, and were sentenced to imprisonment at hard labor for life. Spangler, who impressed most people as being a weak creature, unaware of being con-

cerned in any real crime, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, and, with O'Laughlin, Arnold, and Mudd, was sent to the forts of the Dry Tortugas. Dr. Mudd was pardoned by President Johnson in February, 1869, and Arnold and Spangler about a month later in the same year. O'Laughlin died of yellow fever while in prison at Fort Jefferson, Florida. John H. Surratt, who was at first believed to have been the would-be assassin of Mr. Seward, escaped from Washington immediately after the tragedy, and fled to Canada; thence he went to Italy, where he enlisted in the Papal Zouaves, but was traced by the sleuth-hounds of the United States detective force, and was brought back to this country on an American frigate in December, 1866, and tried, but not convicted.

A painful and depressing feature of this tragical business was the ease with which many well-meaning but unreasonable people not only appeared to forget the awfulness of the crime committed, but made objection to the findings of the court as well. Judge John A. Bingham, who assisted the judge-advocate in the trial, was unjustly, even wickedly, pursued by some of these wrong-headed persons for the part he took in the conviction of Mrs. Surratt. All the evidence in her case pointed unerringly to her guilt as an intelligent accomplice of the assassins. And the fact that Payne sought her house as a place of refuge after his murderous assault upon Seward, was only one of many more conclusive evidences of her active share in the great conspiracy. Her sex appears to have confused the judgment of many who did not follow the trial with attentiveness.

It was natural, but to a lover of Lincoln almost surprising, that while the lifeless form of the martyr was being borne home to Illinois, the newly installed President, Andrew Johnson, was surrounded, courted, and flattered by eager crowds of courtiers and office-seekers in Washington. If Johnson had just been inaugurated, after a political campaign in which he had defeated Lincoln, and was expected to overturn everything that remained of his predecessor's work, the appearance of things would not have been different from what it was. Multitudes from every part of the country rushed upon Washington, some with windy and turgid addresses to the new President, and many more with applications for official favor. To a thoughtful man this exhibition was disgusting beyond description.

Nor was one's respect for a pure democracy heightened by the habitual pose of President Johnson. It was a remarkable illustration of the elasticity and steadiness of our form of government that its machinery moved on without a jar, without tumult, when the head was suddenly stricken down. But the vulgar clamor of the crowds that beset Johnson, the boisterous ravings of the successor of Lincoln, and the complete absorption of Washington quidnuncs in speculations on the "policy" of the new head of the Government, saddened those who regarded this ignoble spectacle with hearts sore with grief for the loss of him who was yet unburied.

All these petty details are but a small part of our history; but they do belong to history. Posterity is already making up its verdict. We must be con-

tent to leave to posterity the final adjustment of all things. Smaller men are passing out of human memory. In the words of one who knew him well, Lincoln "belongs to the ages."