



Lincoln's Murder— Amazing Man Hunt

By
F. L. BLACK

John Surratt, Papal Zouave, Accused of
the Crime, Who Leaped for Liberty
Over a Hundred-Foot Precipice

"**W**HOSO sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," ominously quoted the judge in his charge to the jury in the case of John Harrison Surratt, accused of the murder of Abraham Lincoln. Surratt had escaped to Canada and been concealed for five months by friendly priests; he then fled to Liverpool, London, Paris, Rome; was discovered in the Papal Zouaves and arrested by order of the Pope; he later escaped to Egypt; was arrested again, to be brought in chains on a gunboat to Washington; tried for his life, released, and then deserted by the Genius of Adventure.

This sounds like the synopsis of the strangest fiction, but it is what actually happened to Surratt, Confederate dispatch-bearer and spy, who was a party to the Lincoln abduction plots, and whose mother, Mary Surratt, paid the extreme penalty for her participation in these crimes.

The assassination of President Lincoln occurred sixty-one years ago this week. Testimony was offered at the trial of the conspirators in May, June, and July, 1865, to show that John Surratt had been in Washington on the morning of Friday, April 14, the fatal day, but in his lengthy and highly sensational trial, two years later, he established that he had been in Elmira, New York, arranging for a prison delivery of Confederate captives when John Wilkes Booth played his last tragic act in Ford's Theatre, Washington.

"At the breaking out of the war," said Surratt in telling his story to a Rockville, Maryland, audience in 1868, "I was a student at St. Charles College, in Maryland, but did not remain long there after that important event. I left in July, 1861, and, returning home, commenced to take an active part in the stirring events of that period. I was not more than eighteen years of age, and mostly engaged in sending information regarding the movements of the United States Army stationed in Washington and elsewhere, and carrying dispatches to the Confederate boats



John Surratt in his Zouave uniform.



on the Potomac. We ran a regularly established line from Washington to the Potomac, and I being the only unmarried man on the route had most of the hard riding to do."

He then told of his meetings with John Wilkes Booth and the latter's proposition to kidnap President Lincoln and take him to Richmond. Surratt claims that although at first "amazed, thunderstruck, and in fact, I might say, frightened at the unparalleled audacity of the scheme," yet after two days' reflection, he concluded it to be practicable and "led on by a sincere desire to assist the South in gaining her independence," he told Booth that he was willing to try it. Then followed months of plotting to capture the President, plotting which failed.

In Surratt's own words: "One day we received information that the President would visit the Seventh Street Hospital for the purpose of being present at an entertainment to be given for the benefit of the wounded soldiers. The report reached us only about three-quarters of an hour before the appointed time, but so perfect was our communication that we were instantly in our saddles on the way to the hospital. This was between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. It was our intention to seize the carriage, which was drawn by a splendid pair of horses, and to have one of our men mount the box and drive direct for Southern Maryland via Benning's bridge. We felt confident that all the cavalry in the city could never overhaul us. We were all mounted on swift horses besides having a thorough knowledge of the country, it being determined to abandon the carriage after passing the city limits. Upon the suddenness of the blow and the celerity of our movements we depended for success. By the time the alarm could have been given and horses saddled, we would have been on our way through Southern Maryland

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toward the Potomac River.

"To our great disappointment, however, the President was not there, but one of the Government officials—Mr. Chase, if I mistake not . . . It was our last attempt."

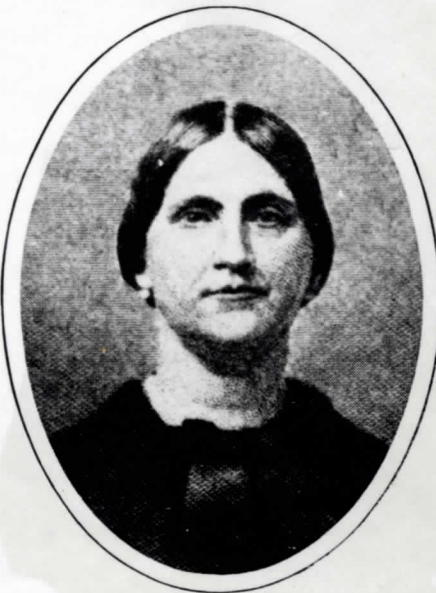
Surratt stated further that the enterprise was then abandoned, and that soon afterward he was given Confederate dispatches to carry from Washington to Richmond, where he arrived on "Friday evening before the evacuation of that city." He left the next morning and again reached Washington "the following Monday," at four o'clock p.m., April 3, 1865. He claims that he left for New York the next day without having seen Booth, and that this was his last time in Washington "until brought there by the United States Government a captive in chains."

He attempted to see Booth in New York but was informed that the actor was in Boston. Surratt then proceeded to Montreal, and after remaining a week was instructed to proceed to Elmira, New York, to make sketches of the military prison and gather information that would aid in the release of the Confederates confined there. Surratt testified that he registered as "John Harrison" in Elmira on the Wednesday before the assassination, palmed himself off as a Canadian in an "Oxford cut jacket and a round-top hat, peculiar to Canada at that time," and remained there until Saturday, when he learned of the assassination and that it was rumored John Wilkes Booth was the assassin.

On the following Monday, after spending the week-end in Canandaigua,

a village near Elmira, with the intention of going back to Baltimore, he bought some New York papers and was startled with: "The assassin of Secretary Seward is said to be John H. Surratt, a notorious secessionist of Southern Maryland. His name, with that of J. Wilkes Booth, will forever lead the infamous roll of assassins."

Montreal, not Baltimore, suddenly became his destination. Arriving in Montreal, which had become the home



Mrs. Mary Surratt, the only woman the United States Government ever hanged.

of many Southerners, Surratt was secreted in the house of a friend where he remained until advised that his hiding place was suspected and the house was to be searched. He left immediately, but after the authorities had satisfied themselves that he was not there, he returned and remained until he left Montreal about a week later. Then as Charles Armstrong and disguised as a huntsman he hid in the home of Father Charles Bouchers, a priest in St. Liboire, a small town lying about 45 miles south of Montreal in a thinly settled territory.

During these days he naturally became greatly worried about the possible fate of his mother, who had been arrested and was being tried as one of the assassination conspirators. He was assured by friends, however, that there was no cause for uneasiness and that any action on his part would only make matters worse.

These friends, he says, became frightened at the prospect of breaking the news of his mother's death sentence, and it was only by accident that, several hours after the death

trap had been sprung, he procured a paper containing the news of her execution.

Surratt told his Rockville audience that after partly recovering from the effect of the shock he went to his room and remained there until dark; then signified his intention to leave the place immediately. "I felt reckless," he said, "as to what should become of me. After visiting Quebec and other places, with the reward of \$25,000 hanging over my head, I did not think it safe to remain there, and so I concluded to seek an asylum in foreign lands."

Father LaPierre (Surratt Trial Records—p. 908), a priest of Montreal, cared for Surratt from late in July until early in September, and then accompanied him to Quebec, where, disguised and under the pseudonym of McCarty, he placed him on board the *Peruvian*, bound for Liverpool. Convinced that there was an American detective on board, and bewildered by his own imagination, Surratt confessed to Dr. McMillan, the ship's physician, his true identity in an effort to obtain protection and advice.

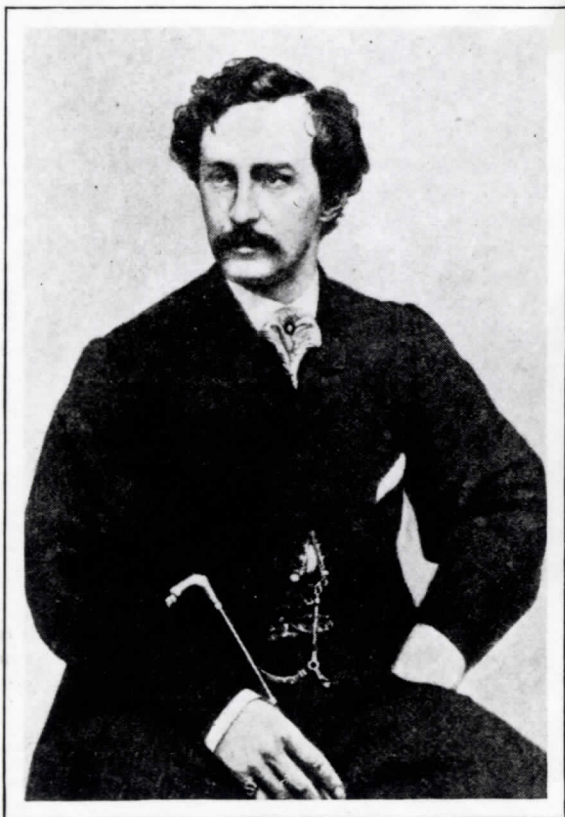
Either feeling it was his duty or with a desire to collect the reward still offered for Surratt, the doctor, on September 26, informed the United States Consulate at Liverpool of the presence of the fugitive. The vice-consul conveyed this intelligence to Washington, but to his surprise, on October 13, received the following from the Acting Secretary of State:

"I have to inform you that, upon a consultation with the Secretary of War and Judge Advocate General, it is thought advisable that no action be taken in regard to the arrest of the supposed John Surratt at present."

The only explanation that has ever been given for this action, and the subsequent delays in apprehending Surratt, is that official Washington began to doubt whether the execution of Mrs. Surratt had been advisable and was not anxious to reawaken the storm that resulted from what many termed her "official murder."

After waiting until early in November for funds expected from Canadian friends, Surratt made his way to London and then to Rome by way of Paris, where after a few months, under the name of John Watson, he enlisted in the Papal Zouaves. This was during the war between Pope Pious IX and Garibaldi, and recruits were welcome in either camp.

By a strange coincidence, Henri St. Marie, a Canadian who had known Surratt three years before in Washington, had also become a Zouave and recognized him. Surratt appealed to St. Marie to keep his secret, but the latter succumbed to the temptation of the large reward. He (Continued on page 30)



John Wilkes Booth.

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informed General Rufus King, then American minister at Rome, of Surratt's whereabouts and of the details of a confession he had made. General King advised the Papal Government of these disclosures and by order of the Pope, the following instructions were issued:

November 6, 1866.

Colonel: Cause the arrest of the Zouave Watson, and have him conducted, under secure escort, to the military prison at Rome. It is of much importance that this order be executed with exactness.

The General, pro-minister, Kanzlei.

Lieutenant-Colonel Allet,
Commanding Zouave Battalion, Velletri.

Lieutenant-Colonel Allet telegraphed as follows:

Pontifical Zouaves, Battalion
Headquarters,
Velletri, November 7, 1866.

General: I have the honor to inform you that the Zouave John Watson has been arrested at Veroli, and will be taken tomorrow morning, under good escort, to Rome. While he was searched for at Trisulti, which was his garrison, he was arrested by Captain De Lambilly, at Veroli, where he was on leave.

I have the honor to be, General,
your Excellency's
Very humble and obedient
servant,
Lieut.-Colonel Allet.

His Excellency, the General-Minister
of War, Rome.

PONTIFICAL TELEGRAPH
Velletri, 8:35 A.M. Nov. 8, 1866.

His Excellency, the General-
Minister of War, Rome:

I received the following telegram from Captain Lambilly: At the moment of leaving the prison, surrounded by six men as guards, Watson plunged into the ravine, more than a hundred feet deep, which defends the prison. Fifty Zouaves are in pursuit.

Lieut.-Colonel Allet.

The story of these three days cannot be more graphically related than by Surratt himself: (Interview with Surratt—Boston *Sunday Post*, April 3, 1898.)

"In the meantime I was confined in a cell in the old monastery. The second day after my arrest, or rather the second night, a messenger arrived from Antonelli directing the officer in command of the post, the Baron De Serappo, who you will remember married Miss Polk of North Carolina, to have me sent to Rome under heavy guard the moment the summons was received. I was awakened at four a.m. by the rusty key grating in the lock of my cell, and by the light of a flickering lantern I saw that my untimely visitors were an officer and six soldiers, all heavily armed. At once I knew what it meant, and when the lieutenant in command ordered me to dress at once in order to go to Rome I at once made up my mind that, let the consequences be what

they may, I would not go to the Eternal City.

"While dressing I mentally arranged a plan of escape. This old monastery was built on the side of the mountains, nestling on one side, and the west side was directly over a precipice over a hundred feet high. A wall four feet high guarded the court yard. I was determined to break away from my captors and go over the precipice. When I was finished dressing I was placed in the center of this guard and we slowly ascended the stone steps of the old building, worn smooth by countless feet of many generations of monks. We reached the court yard and turned towards the left. Just as we reached the point I had selected for my attempt I made a break for liberty, and running quickly across the court yard jumped

A Fearful Leap for Liberty

on the wall. Gathering myself for the attempt I took a long breath and jumped into space, doubling my legs slightly under me as I did so. About thirty-five feet from the top of the precipice there was a bare ledge of rock jutting out from the face of the mountain and about four feet broad. By great good fortune I landed safely on that ledge."

Surratt was asked whether he knew of the existence of the ledge or landed on it by accident.

"Know of it?" was his answer. "Why of course I knew of it. Do you think I would have been such an idiot as to jump over a 100-foot precipice to certain death in that manner? Many and many a time my comrades and myself in hours of idleness would lean over that precipice and wonder how many feet it was from the wall of the court yard to the ledge, and it was an open question as to whether a man could jump from the wall and land safely on the ledge. While dressing I was determined to make the attempt. It makes my blood run cold to think of it now, though. However, I managed to land on it safely and my legs doubling up under me, my head struck the bare rock with fearful force."

After describing the scene of wild confusion and surprise by his sudden break for freedom and the attempt made by his guard to shoot him, Surratt continued. "I was brought back to my senses by the reports of their rifles from above and the bullets flattening themselves on the bare rocks unpleasantly near my head. Dizzy and sick and shaken, I managed to gather myself together and crawl out of danger and gradually make my way down the side of the mountain to the little town which nestled at its base. Running along the main street of the town I ran directly into the arms of a detail of Zouaves. They were as much surprised as I, but I had the advantage of being on the alert. With me it was almost a matter of life and death. Doubling quickly on my tracks and expecting every moment to be hit by some of the bullets which were flying around my head, I ran like a frightened deer; through alleys, down dark streets and across lots I sped, and managed to elude my pursuers.

"In the meantime the entire town was in an uproar. Everyone had the alarm, and all the gates were guarded. Selecting a good point I managed to get over the wall and headed down the white Italian road toward

the coast. I should have said at the beginning that all this took place during the early hours of the morning. It was four a.m. when I was aroused and told to dress. By the time I had left the town a few miles in the rear, the sun was high in the heavens and I was congratulating myself on my three escapes when I was suddenly startled by the sharp command:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friend," I answered in my best Italian, recognizing that I had run into a Garibaldian camp. Glancing at my papal uniform, the outpost was by no means reassured. In the meantime I had raised my hands above my head. Bringing his rifle to his shoulder he was pressing the trigger unpleasantly hard. Raising my hands even higher in the air I sang out to him 'Lower your rifle, man; can't you see my hands are up?' Still covering me with his rifle he ordered me to advance within a few paces of him and called out lustily for the corporal of the guard. That officer came on the run, and seeing my rig called for the sergeant of the guard. He no sooner caught glimpse of my dress than he called for the officer of the guard. To make a long story short, I was soon surrounded by a mob of Garibaldians of all ranks and sizes. When I told them that I was an American, a deserter from the *Papilo Guardo* and wanted to get to the coast, they treated me with the greatest kindness."

It was the third of November when Surratt escaped from the Papal Zouaves. On the sixteenth, having made his way to Naples, he there represented himself to the British consul as a Canadian citizen and obtained, through the aid of the consul, passage to Egypt. But the American Consul of Alexandria, having been informed of his destination through the authorities in Naples, boarded the vessel upon its arrival there and placed Surratt, easily recognizable in his Zouave uniform, under arrest.

Surratt remained in an Egyptian government prison in Alexandria from November 27 until December 21, when a naval vessel, the *Swatara*, dispatched to that point, received him in chains and sailed for the Washington Navy Yard. The *Swatara* was quite small and the commander was in a quandary just where to put his prisoner. According to one of the officers on board, the "commander finally concluded to relinquish his bathroom, which was outside his cabin, with a door opening on the spar deck, and it was fitted up as a stateroom, and the prisoner made as comfortable as could be." (Geo. D. Barton, *New York Sun*, May 20, 1916).

Surratt Is Sent Back to Washington

Two months later, after storming through heavy seas and a hard gale on February 21, 1867, Surratt, who was a wretched sailor and had suffered greatly from seasickness, was again in Washington, facing an indictment in the criminal court for the District of Columbia for the murder of Abraham Lincoln.

On June 10, 1867, his sixty-one day trial began. Few murder trials have been more spectacular or harder fought. Joseph H. Bradley, Sr., Surratt's leading counsel, lost his temper and challenged the judge to a duel. While in Washington, St. Marie, the fellow-Zouave who had betrayed him, was

"in constant, though apparently groundless, terror of being assassinated," and when St. Marie suddenly appeared on the stand to testify, newspaper correspondents present noted "a single, deadly glance passed between him and Surratt."

More than two hundred witnesses were examined, some of whom testified that Surratt was in Washington on April 14, 1865, the day of the assassination. But the defense was able to impress eight of the jury, seven of whom were southern born, that Surratt's alibi was sufficient for acquittal. After three days' balloting the judge was informed that the jury was divided and "could not possibly make a verdict." They were dismissed and Surratt sent back to the old Capitol prison, where he remained until June 22 of the following year. He was then released on twenty-five thousand dollars' bail.

Three months later, the prosecution, realizing the apparent futility of proving that Surratt took part in the assassination of President Lincoln, attempted to press charges of conspiracy and treason. It was then learned that the two-year limitation for such an indictment made a trial on these charges impossible and the court freed John Harrison Surratt from further duress.

After attempting a profitless lecture tour, he settled in Baltimore and for many years was employed by one of the Chesapeake steamship companies. The remainder of his life was uneventful, and his death occurred early in May, 1916—fifty-one years after it would have taken place had he been tried by the same tribunal that sent his mother to the gallows.

Surratt was not inclined to talk of his experiences, and few who met him ever knew that behind his piercing gray eyes, deeply hidden beneath heavy brows, there was the memory of hairbreadth escapes rivaling in romantic interest and dramatic detail those of the wildest fiction.

The material in this story was obtained from files of the newspapers of the period, the official reports of the Surratt trial issued by the Government Printing Office in 1867, and an interview with Surratt which appeared in the Boston *Sunday Post*, April 3, 1898, the New York *Sun*, May 20, 1916, and *The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* by Oldroyd.

Woodrow Wilson's Gift

AS President Wilson was leaving Billings, Montana, three barefooted lads of 12 or 14 chased alongside the last car of the train. "Hey, Mr. President, take this!" shouted one, handing up a little flag. Mr. Wilson took it. "Here, Mr. President, take this!" cried the second. His gift, a yellow chrysanthemum, was also accepted. These two boys, radiant with grins, dropped out of the running, leaving the third with gloom pictured in his face. He had nothing in his hands to give.

Suddenly, when it seemed that he could no longer maintain the increasing pace, his freckled countenance beamed. He reached into his pocket and held something tiny toward the President, panting: "Here y'are, Mis-ter—Wilson!" The President's hand closed over the little fellow's. When it came away it held a worn silver dime.

"All he had!" said the President gravely regarding the coin. "That's America. It gives all it has. I'm going to keep this!" Then he swung his cap to the happy youngster until the town vanished in the distance.

Housekeeping in Our Paris Flat

(Concluded from page 4)

unteered to interpret for her. So Mrs. Bindle got what she wanted, and she told the "lovely lady" what a hard time we were having. "I am the housekeeper for Mrs. Dillon. Won't you come and talk to her? We never hear anything but this furrin' parleyvooving!" said Mrs. Bindle.

At any rate, we did not chide her for her forwardness, and we had an honest-to-goodness dinner that day.

Several days later my wife was arranging flowers on the window ledges when a lady passing in the street stopped and spoke to her, making herself known as the lady who had interpreted for Mrs. Bindle. My wife said, among other things in the conversation, that she had a longing for a cup of American coffee; she couldn't get used to French coffee.

Two days after there came to our door six ladies bringing packages, led by our American "lovely lady." They brought a coffee pot, American coffee, cream, and cakes, just an old-fashioned American surprise party, and what a time they had at the coffee feast that afternoon! They were all Americans who had lived in Paris some years, quite charming women. That was the beginning of our acquaintance with many of the 25,000 American permanent residents of Paris.

But Mrs. Bindle fell into utter hopelessness. She could not learn the French names of foods. The French money system was a horror to her and the instigator of a nightmare when she went to bed. She complained that the "centimes" were driving her crazy. There are 100 centimes in a franc; the smallest French coin is a 5-centime piece with a hole in the center, worth at the time of writing one-fifth of an American cent. Nothing can be purchased with it, but it is used in making change.

At the end of two months I put Mrs. Bindle on a train bound for Calais, and pinned on her a card in French telling her identity and destination and bespeaking kindness for her. She arrived safely at her home in the west of England and I was told by her parish rector that she has given daily thanks to the Almighty ever since for bringing her out of France alive.

Then we installed a French housekeeper, one who knew not one word of English, and from that time to the end of our stay in the flat life moved rhythmically for us.

She undertook the entire management of the kitchen, dining room, and the cleaning and arrangement of all the rooms. She did all the catering and cooking. Our breakfast (*petit dejeuner* meaning literally "little breakfast") was the usual French coffee and hot milk and bread—nothing else. The *dejeuner* (literally "breakfast") was served at 1 p. m. and was quite like an American midday dinner without soup (there is no "luncheon" in France). Dinner was served at 7 p. m., a meal much like *dejeuner* in quantity, and with the addition of soup.

I advanced her the money for purchases, 200 francs at a time. She would take her basket each morning (including Sunday morning for food shops are all open on Sunday), and go to the shops or markets, bringing home whatever she liked, without consulting us. She aimed to surprise us at each meal, preparing each repast mysteriously. She had a book in which she kept a record of all her purchases and the

prices. If she received a commission, privately, from each shopkeeper on everything she purchased, it was none of my business nor did I inquire about it. This commission belonged to her by right from time immemorial; the custom is established in France as firmly as the "squeeze" in China.

For all this service we paid her 100 francs a week (about \$5.00), which high salary made her the envy of other French women engaged in a similar occupation.

We allowed her to retain a *femme de menage*—a woman who comes in to clean the rooms—twice a week, we paying this woman 10 francs to 13 francs for each day she came.

These wages seem low, compared with American wages, but it must be remembered that an unskilled laboring man in Paris at the time was getting \$1.25 a day. Masons (builders) got \$1.60 a day. Street car conductors earned \$28.00 a month. I was told that the editor of one of the leading magazines got \$80.00 a month. Clerks in banks got about \$25.00 a month. Stenographers (women) got from \$18.00 to \$30.00 a month.

I have copied from Henriette's expense book the following list of *comestibles* with the prices we paid, expressed approximately in American money of the exchange current at the time:

Beef (roast).....	50 cents per lb.
Beef consomme (boiling).....	32 cents per lb.
Beef steak.....	40 cents per lb.
Mutton cutlet (chop).....	75 cents per lb.
Mutton (leg for roasting).....	50 cents per lb.
Mutton (for stewing).....	25 cents per lb.
Lamb (leg for roast).....	50 cents per lb.
Lamb (for stewing).....	30 cents per lb.
Veal (roast).....	55 cents per lb.
Veal (for stewing).....	30 cents per lb.
Veal brains.....	40 cents per lb.
Pork (filet for roasting).....	60 cents per lb.
Bacon.....	52 cents per lb.
Chickens (for roasting).....	50 cents per lb.
Pigeons.....	50 cents apiece
Bread.....	7½ cents per 1 lb. loaf
Butter.....	50 cents per lb.
Eggs.....	4 cents each
Tea.....	95 cents per lb.
Coffee.....	50 cents per lb.
Milk.....	5 cents per quart
Potatoes.....	7 cents per lb.
Leeks.....	20 cents per bunch (about 3 lbs.)
Carrots and turnips.....	7 cents per bunch
Peas.....	20 cents per lb.
String beans.....	30 cents per lb.
Mushrooms.....	40 cents per lb.
Spinach.....	5 cents per lb.
Cauliflower.....	15 cents per medium head
Apples.....	10 cents per lb. (three large apples)
Pears.....	20 cents per lb.
Prunes.....	25 cents per lb.
Apricots.....	25 cents per lb.
Oranges.....	2½ cents apiece.
Swiss cheese.....	40 cents per lb.
Brie cheese.....	35 cents per lb.
Roquefort cheese.....	45 cents per lb.
Fish (Whiting).....	15 cents per lb.
Fish (Mackerel).....	15 cents per lb.
Fish (Herring).....	10 cents per lb.
Fish (Sole).....	60 cents per lb.
Fish (Lobster).....	50 cents per lb.

A semi-bituminous coal was used in the kitchen stove; it cost \$1.00 per 200 lbs. English anthracite cost \$2.10 per 200 lbs. In the fireplaces *boulets* were used—coal dust pressed into hard oval-shaped nuggets about twice the size of a hen's egg; they cost 85 cents per 200 lbs.

Our electric lighting bill averaged \$4.00 a month. The gas averaged \$2.50 a month.

After all, nobody can get the true flavor of life in Paris if he or she does not understand ordinary French conversation. From the very first day my wife spoke—I had almost said chattered—French with the housekeeper, and that, in itself, one might say, justified the adventure of keeping house in Paris.