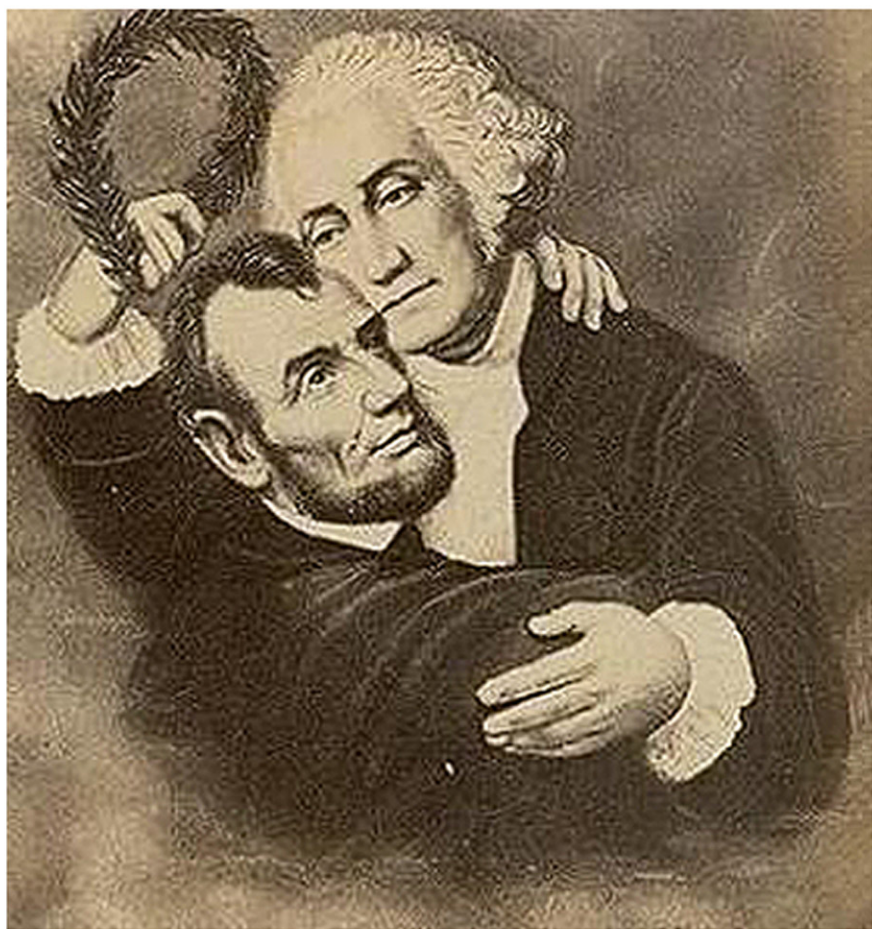


April, 1865

THE DEATH OF LINCOLN.

The same hour that the President was shot, a man appeared at the door of Secretary Seward and pretended that he was a messenger from the physician who was then attending upon the secretary. Being refused admittance, he forced his way to the secretary's chamber. Frederick Seward and an attendant rushed to the rescue, but were both severely wounded. The assassin—probably the rough-looking fellow observed by Sergeant Dye in front of Ford's Theatre—entered the chamber and inflicted several wounds upon the secretary, and then escaped. It had been intended by the assassins to kill Secretary Stanton, Lieutenant General Grant, and Vice-President Johnson, and thus paralyze the government. But even if all this had been accomplished the conspirators would have been disappointed. Secretary Seward survived the blows inflicted upon him, but to his dying day will wear the honorable scars which associate him in the thoughts of the people with the martyrdom of their President.

The tidings of the assassination spread rapidly over the country. In all history there was never national sorrow to be compared with this. Literally the whole people wept. Thousands there were who would willingly have received the fatal bullet in their own hearts if thereby they could have saved the precious life of their leader. Even those who had for four years reviled Lincoln, who had called him a boor and a despot, now vied with his friends in their adulation. A few rejoiced in the murder, but their lips were closed partly from fear and partly from the universal expression of sorrow which struck them dumb.



But who and where were the murderers? The assassin of the President, as he escaped across the stage, was recognized by one of the actors as John Wilkes Booth. Other evidence was soon found which fixed upon this person the guilt of the murder. But, though he left traces of his guilt behind, he was not to be found. The rendezvous of the conspirators was discovered. It was the house of Mrs. M. E. Surratt, located in the very heart of Washington. On the night of April 17th the officers of the government proceeded thither and arrested the occupants—Mrs. Surratt, her daughter Anna, Miss Fitzpatrick, and Miss Holahan. Before leaving the house a light knock was heard at the door. It was opened, and a young man appeared, evidently in disguise. He was dressed like a common laborer, and carried a pick upon his shoulder. But his hands were white and soft, apparently unused to labor, and his answers to questions put to him were unsatisfactory. During the investigation he produced the certificate of an oath of allegiance, purporting to have been taken by Lewis Payne, of Fauquier County, Virginia. He was arrested, and it was afterward proved that he was the man who had attempted to murder Secretary Seward, and that his real name was Powell. Three days later George A. Atzerott was captured near Middleburg, in Maryland. He had on the 14th of April occupied a room in the Kirkwood House, Washington, where Vice-President Johnson was staying. In this room a revolver was found the next day, hid under the pillow of the bed, and some bowie-knives between the mattresses. There was also found evidence of his complicity with Booth.

The principal assassin, John Wilkes Booth, was not found until eleven days after the murder. When he leaped upon the stage at Ford's Theatre, his foot became entangled in the folds of the flag decorating the box occupied by Lincoln, and his leg was broken. He had engaged one of the swiftest steeds in Washington, which was held by one of the attendants of the theatre during the accomplishment of the crime. Limping across the stage with great difficulty, he mounted his horse and was joined by one Harold, who had been on the look-out. They crossed the navy-yard bridge and rode to Surrattsville, ten miles beyond. Here they called upon a Mr. Lloyd, who occupied a hotel leased to him by Mrs. Surratt, and obtained two carbines which had been left there about six weeks before for just this emergency. That very afternoon Mrs. Surratt had driven to Mr. Lloyd's and warned him that these weapons would be called for that night. She had also brought a field-glass for Booth's use. From this point Booth and his companion hurried to the house of Dr. Mudd, on the eastern shore of the Potomac. Here Booth's leg was set, and the two criminals were concealed in the neighborhood for nearly a week. Then they crossed the Potomac into Virginia. The detectives employed by the government, under Colonel Baker's direction, and a small squad of cavalry, were already close upon them. They crossed the Potomac, and from Captain Jett, a Confederate, extorted information as to Booth's hiding-place. On the night of April 25th they found Booth and Harold secreted in a tobacco-house on Garrett's farm, a short distance from Port Royal. It was the intention of the officers to take Booth alive. The barn was surrounded, and the inmates were summoned to surrender. Colonel Baker made the demand, and suggested as an alternative "a bonfire and a shooting-match." Harold came out, but Booth wanted "fair play," and proposed that the officers stand off and give him a chance

for his life. As he persisted in his refusal to surrender, the barn was fired. Booth made a desperate plunge toward the door, and at that moment was shot in the back of the head by Sergeant Boston Corbett. This act of Corbett was clearly a disobedience of orders.

Booth was taken out of the barn, and was laid upon the grass in a dying condition. The wound which he had received was in its location very similar to that which he had inflicted upon the President, but it did not deprive him of consciousness. Water was given him, and he revived. Baker put his ear close to the murmuring lips of the dying man, and heard him say, "Tell mother I die for my country." He was carried to the veranda of Garrett's house. Here he again revived, and said, "I thought I did for the best." He asked that his hands might be raised so that he could see them. As he looked upon them he muttered, "Useless! useless!" These were his last words. Ay, indeed, wretched man, how useless!

