Samuel "was much frightened and would not join him"

There follows the

The following statement of John Matthews, an actor friend of John Wilkes Booth, undoubtedly explains how Booth first learned that the Grants would not be at the theater with the Lincolns.

told Chester (see Chapter II) the who This

From The National Intelligencer - July 1867 - Clipping in The Lincoln Scrap Book - Congressional Library - P 94 and 95).

"THE BOOTH LETTER

"The following communication has been sent to us by Mr. John Matthews, the only person who is able to give any information in regard to the letter written by J. Wilkes Booth, and addressed to the editor of the NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER. Mr. Matthews was a witness in the Surratt trial, but was not permitted by the Court to testify in regard to the letter alluded to. As statements have been publicly made in reference to Mr. Matthews' connection with this letter, he asks the publication of this communication in justification of himself and truth:

"'WASHINGTON, July 17, 1867.

"'Editors Intelligencer:

"'GENTLEMEN: Much has been said in the public prints in regard to the missing letter of John Wilkes Booth. As I am the person to whom this letter was entrusted, I know its contents and the circumstances attending its delivery into my hands better than any person now living.

"'It was on the afternoon of Good Friday, April 14, 1865, at about 4 o'clock, that I met John Wilkes Booth(on horseback) on Pennsylvania avenue, at the triangular enclosure between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets. We met, shook hands, and passed the compliments of the day. It so happened that the officers of General Lee's army had just passed up in a body. I asked Booth: "Johnny, have you seen Lee's officers, just

brought in!" He replied, "Yes, Johnny, I have!" then placing his hand upon his forehead, exclaimed, "Great God, I have no longer a country." Observing his paleness, nervousness, and agitation, I remarked, "John, how nervous you are; what is the matter! "to which he replied, "Oh, no, it is nothing," and continued with, "Johnny, I have a little favor to ask of you, will you grant it?" "Why certainly, Johnny," I replied: "what is it!" He then stated, "Perhaps I may leave town to-night, and I have a letter here which I desire to be published in the NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER; please attend to it for me, unless I see you before ten o'clock to-morrow; in that case I will see to it myself."

At that moment I observed General Grant riding by in an open carriage, carrying also his baggage. Seeing this, I called Mr. Booth's attention to him, and said, "Why, Johnny, there goes Grant. I thought he was coming to the theatre this evening with the President." "Where?" he exclaimed. I pointed to the carriage; he looked towards it, grasped my hand tightly, and galloped down the avenue after the carriage. That was the last time I met him until I saw him on the stage of Ford's Theatre on the memorable night of the 14th of April.

Time passed on. Many persons who know Booth or had ever seen him were arrested and sent to prison. The secret of the letter was confided to a few confidential friends only; but when I saw that the editors of the NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER were suspected of having suppressed the document, and were interrogated in regard to it at the Penitentiary trial, I considered it my duty to assume all responsibility in the matter by explaining the whole affair to the proprietors of said paper. Accordingly I did so. I did call at the office of the paper, and stated all the facts to them, as stated above.

To-day, in court, after answering a few direct questions, I endeavored to make an explanation of the matter, which was objected to by the prosecution, and refused by Judge Fisher.

The New York Herald, who first procured the news from the Judiciary Committee of my having been before them, and what testimony I had given, has spoken of a secrecy of manner, and an observation "If something should occur during the night," etc., on the part of Wilkes Booth. I desire to state all that did occur at that interview, and

to say, also, that the letter was given with no secrecy of manner, nor was there any remark made about anything that might occur during the night.

Now for the contents of the letter: It was written on a sheet of commercial note paper, covering three pages. The first two pages were written in the spirit and style of the Philadelphia letter, and it was only at the concluding paragraph that anything was said bearing upon what had transpired, which was to this effect and in these words:

For a long time I have devoted my energies, my time and money to the accomplishment of a certain end. I have been disappointed. The moment has now arrived when I must change my plans. Many will blame me for what I am about to do; but posterity, I am sure, will justify me.

Men who love their country better than gold or life.

JOHN W. BOOTH, PAYNE, HEROLD, ATZERODT.

Respectfully, JOHN MATTHEWS.