Century april 1884

HOW WILKES BOOTH CROSSED THE POTOMAC.

THE most dramatic of historical assassinations has had, until now, an unrelated interval. The actor John Wilkes Booth shot President Abraham Lincoln about ten o'clock Friday night, April 14th, 1865. Near midnight he and his uninteresting road pilot, David E. Herold, called at Surratt's tavern, about ten miles south-east of Washington, and obtained the arms, field glass, etc., previously prepared for them there. Saturday morning they were at Dr. Samuel A. Mudd's, twenty miles farther on, where Booth's broken ankle was set and a crutch made for him; and that evening the two fugitives were guided in a roundabout way to the gate of Samuel Cox, a prosperous Southern sympathizer, about fifteen miles south-west.

The last witness in Maryland ended here. The Government, in its prosecution of the conspirators, took up the fugitive next at the crossing of the Rappahannock River in Virginia, on the 24th of April, having failed to trace Booth a single step farther in Maryland, although he did not cross the Potomac until Saturday night, April 22d. A whole week remains unaccounted for; and for the first time the missing links of the connection are here made public. Probably not half a dozen people are alive who have ever heard the narrative fully told.

When Annapolis was a greater place than Baltimore, and the Patuxent Valley the most populous part of Maryland, the main roads and ferries to all-powerful Virginia were on the lower Potomac, instead of being, as now, above Washington City. The most important of these ferries crossed at a narrow part of the river, where it is from two to three miles wide, near a stream on the Maryland side called Pope's Creek. Just below this spot, and not far above it, there are deep indentations from the river which narrow the open ground over which its banks are reached. A railroad, built since the war, for this reason has its terminus at Pope's Creek. About five miles north of the terminus is Cox's Station, which is about six miles south of the old court-house village of Port Tobacco. A short distance east of Cox's Station is Samuel Cox's house; a short distance west of Cox's Station, perhaps two or three miles, is the old Catholic manor house of St. Thomas's, by an ancient church which gives the name to "Chapel" Point. Here the Potomac sends up Port Tobacco River, a broad tidal stream, naturally indicated at the beginning of the war as the nearest safe point for spies and go-betweens to reach broad water from Washington. Mathias Point, on the Virginia side, makes a high salient angle into the waters of Maryland here, and is almost in the direct line from Washington to Richmond.

In this old region of the Calvert Catholics, a civilization existed at the close of the last century probably comparable with that of tide-water Virginia. The Episcopal Church, tobacco, and large landed estates, with slaves, were features of the high bluff country, which was plentifully watered with running streams amidst the hills of clay and gravel. But the Revolution emancipated the Catholic worship originally planted on the lower Potomac by the founders of Maryland, and a curious English society took root, with its little churches surmounted by the cross, its slaves attendants upon mass and confession; and much of the country, originally poor, was covered with decaying estates, old fields grown up in small pines, and deep gullies penetrating to the heart of the hills. The malaria almost depopulated the little towns and hamlets, tobacco became an uncertain crop, slavery kept the people poor, and intercourse fell off with the rest of the world, possibly excepting some of the old counties in Virginia in Washington's "Northern Neck."

Soon after the year 1820 Mr. Cox was born in the district below Port Tobacco, and his mother dying, he was put to nurse with a Mrs. Jones, the wife of a plain man, possibly an overseer, who inhabited the house. She had a son, Thomas A. Jones, who grew up with young Cox; they were playmates and attended the same log school-house, and Cox, as life progressed, had the ruling influence over Jones, who was a cool, brave man, but without the self-assertion of his comrade, who soon developed into one of the most energetic men in that region.

A portrait of Samuel Cox shows him to have been of an indomitable will, strengthened by that consumptive tendency which often gives desperation to men fond of life. At the breaking out of the war Mr. Cox had thirty to forty slaves, plenty of land, a large house with out-buildings, negro quarters, woodlands, and a superior appearance for those parts. He became the captain of a volunteer company, which he drilled at Bryantown, a small settlement in the eastern part of the county,

deeper. The world is opening to the poet with every question the crucible asks of the elements, with every spectrum the prism steals from a star. The old he has and all the new.

But how short was his day, and how slight his opportunity! From the time that he was of age he waged a constant hopeless fight for life. For months he could do no work. He was driven to Texas, to Florida, to Pennsylvania, to North Carolina, to try to recover health from pine breaths and clover blossoms. He was supported by the implicit faith of his devoted wife, who fully believed in his genius, and was willing to suffer everything if he could only find his opportunity; but there was, from the time he left Macon, the constant pitiful struggle not for health alone, but for bread which he must earn for his babes. Notwithstanding the generous help of his father, which was more than could be asked, there were long periods of the very slenderest support from chance writing for a magazine, or a few lectures or lessons when his strength would allow. But his courage and that of his wife never failed. He still kept before him first his ideal and his mission, and he longed to live that he might accomplish them. It must have been in such a mood that he wrote to his wife in 1874:

"So many great ideas for art are born to me each day, I am swept away into the Land of All Delight by their strenuous, sweet whirlwind; and I feel within myself such entire, yet humble, confidence of possessing every single element of power to carry them all out save the little paltry sum of money that would suffice to keep us clothed and fed in the mean time.

"I do not understand this."

As also the following sketch for a poem which he never put into rhyme:

"O Lord, if thou wert needy as I,
If thou shouldst come to my door as I to thine,
If thou hungered so much as I
For that which belongs to the spirit,
For that which is fine and good,—
Ah, Friend, for that which is fine and good,—
I would give it to thee if I had power.
For that which I want is first bread—
Thy decree, not my choice, that bread must be first;
Then music; then some time out of the struggle for bread to write my poems;
Then to put out of care Henry and Robert, whom I love.
O my God, how little would put them out of care!"

At last, when his strength was utterly gone, he seemed to have conquered success enough to assure him a livelihood, and a chance to write his poems. Then he died. It was with a terror, almost, that his friends listened to the last course of his lectures, fearing he might not live out the hour. He had risen from the sick-bed which he was not expected to leave, and with great pain and in much weakness he wrote out his notes. He was taken in a close carriage to the University, read the lectures sitting in the chair, too weak to rise, and then suffered a chill of exhaustion on the way home. Three months after, he died. Why was no Mæcenas found who would gladly give the cost of an evening's party to supply him the rest which might prolong a life worth millions of common lives?

A man with real genius must know it, just as we know we have talent or shiftiness or resource. In 1874, at the very time of his new baptism into art, he wrote to his wife:

"It is of little consequence whether *I* fail; the 'I' in the matter is a small business; '*Que mon nom soit flétri, que la France soit libre!*' quoth Danton; which is to say, interpreted by my environment: Let my name perish; the poetry is good poetry, and the music is good music; and beauty dieth not, and the heart that needs it will find it."

How many hearts need it and will find it, it may be too soon to guess. For my part, I believe it will find a larger and a yet larger audience, and that his short half-dozen years of literary life, though much hindered, will fill a great space in our history of poetry and art.

William Hayes Ward.

[As we go to press, a complete edition of the poems of Sidney Lanier is announced by his publishers, Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons. The volume will be edited by his wife, and Dr. William Hayes Ward will furnish an introduction.—EDITOR.]

where the lands were unusually good and the neighbors plentiful in slaves. Hardly one of them an original secessionist, the course of events forced most of those slave-holders into sympathy with the South, if not through their sensitiveness about their slave property, yet from the fact that their sons often hastened to cross the river into the Confederate army, while in many cases their negroes slipped off in the opposite direction within the Federal lines. The responsibility for disloyalty did not rest with these humble people off the great highways of life, but followed from the political consequences of breaking the Union asunder, and leaving them on the Union frontier with all the necessities and traditions of slavery. The Government paid but little attention to them, seeing that they were below the line of military operations, divided by a broad river from the ragged peninsulas of the rebellion; and, therefore, there almost immediately sprang up in lower Maryland, a system of contraband travel and traffic which soon demoralized nearly everybody.

Thomas A. Jones, who had somewhat risen in the world and had a few slaves, sympathized warmly with the South; he owned a farm right at Pope's Creek, the most eligible situation of all for easy intercourse with Virginia. His house was on a bluff eighty to one hundred feet high, from which he could look up the Potomac to the west, across Mathias Point, and see at least seven miles of the river-way, while his view down the Potomac was fully nine miles.

The moment actual war broke out, and intercourse ceased at Washington and above it with Virginia, great numbers of people came to the house of Jones and to that of his next neighbor on the bluff, Major Roderick G. Watson, asking to be sent across the Potomac. These fugitives were of all descriptions: lawyers, business men, women, resigned army officers, adventurers, suspected persons, —even the agents of foreign bankers and of foreign countries.

Major Watson had a large frame house, relatively new, two stories high, with dormer windows in the high roof, and with a servants' wing. He had a son in the Confederate army, and grown-up daughters; and his house became the signal station for the Confederates across the river, one of his daughters setting the signal, which consisted of a shawl or other black object, put up at the dormer window, whenever it was not safe to send the boat across from Virginia. This window was kept in focus from Grimes's house on the other side, about two miles and a half distant,—a small low house, planted at the water's edge, from which the glass could read the signal, which no Federal officer, whether in his gunboat or ashore, could suspect. Major Watson was somewhat advanced in years, and died while his neighbor Jones was serving an imprisonment in the Old Capitol prison.

On Jones's return to his home, he therefore became the most trusted neighbor of the Watson family, and they accommodated him as he assisted them. The young lady in the family was as enthusiastic for the Confederate cause, and as discreet in all her talks and walks as Jones himself, on whose countenance no human being could ever read what was passing within his mind. He had attended to his fishery and his farm until the war broke out, without having had an incident to mark his life; but suddenly there was an incursion of strangers to whose needs his rooted ideas of hospitality, no less than his sympathy for the Confederates, led him to hearken. His farming was almost broken up, and he took to crossing the river nearly every night, and sometimes twice or more of a night, with boats, sometimes rowed by two pairs of oars, at others by three, while he steered with an oar in the stern. The interlopers could ride down from Washington to Pope's Creek in six or seven hours, and Jones could put them at Grimes's house opposite in less than an hour. The idea of making money in this traffic never seems to have occurred to the man at all: he regarded these strangers as intrusted to his care by Providence or pity; and although his liberty was constantly in danger, he seldom received more than a dollar or two for taking anybody across. Some persons argued with him that he did not charge enough, and told him to look out for his family and the future; but, as the sequel will show, he did a vast amount of hard and dangerous labor for next to nothing, and in the end the Confederate Government also left him unpaid.

The original rebel route from Pope's Creek to Richmond was through Fredericksburg; but this being considerably to the west, a new route was opened over the old road to Port Royal on the Rappahannock River. Adventurers were taken by Jones or his neighbors across to Grimes's, who, assisted by one or two of his neighbors, carried them by vehicles in three or four hours to Port Conway, where a ferry was maintained across the Rappahannock River to Port Royal, and eighteen miles beyond it the high road from Washington to Richmond was open. Mr. Jones says that he may have crossed the Potomac one hundred times before he was arrested, but has no record of the days.

In the latter part of June, 1861, General Sickles came with troops to the lower Po-

tomac to keep a watch on the contraband intercourse. Grimes was found on the Maryland shore and sent to Fort Delaware. Jones was arrested when he returned from his second visit to Richmond and sent to the Old Capitol prison at Washington, and kept there six months. He was allowed to write to his family, subject to the inspection of his letters, and to talk to any of them when an officer was by. This imprisonment, together with his adventurous cruises previously, sharpened his wits, increased his knowledge of men and the world, and educated him for the official position he was soon afterward to occupy of chief signal agent of the Confederacy north of the Potomac. Misfortunes, however, attended his affairs. His wife, who had a large family of children, was taken sick through care and confinement while he was absent, and died. His farm was mortgaged, and, not pursuing the regular vocations of peace, the mortgage slowly ate up the farm, and near the close of the war he had to remove from his river-side residence to an old place called Huckleberry, about two miles and a half inland.

Mr. Jones was released in March, 1862, by a general jail delivery ordered by Congress under the belief that the prisons were full of innocent men. He took an oath that he would not communicate with the enemy again, and was informed of the penalty of breaking it. He returned to his house on the river bluff, and soon an armed patrol and steam vessels were maintained on the river, and the Federal officers boasted that they had a spy on every farm. One of the fine old mansions on the river, Hooe's house, which had been the almost immemorial ferry-house, was set on fire by the Federal flotilla and burnt, for having given harborage to one of Grimes's boat parties.

Grimes again communicated with Jones, and asked him to go into an undertaking to carry the Confederate mail from Canada and the United States to Richmond. Jones replied that the risk was too great, and that his duty to his children required him to stay at home, although his heart was in the Confederate cause, and he would give it any assistance possible. Upon this, the Confederate signal officer, Major William Norris, who had been a Maryland man and is still alive, held an interview with Jones, and asked him to take charge of the rebel communications, stating that they were of the utmost consequence to the management of the Confederate cause and its intercourse with the outer world, the Federal blockade now being well maintained and every portion of the border closely watched, while the broad Potomac River and the pine-covered hills of lower Maryland afforded almost a sure crossing-place. Finally, Jones said that if he were given absolute control, not only over the ferry, but over all agents to be retained in Maryland, the names of none of whom he should be called upon ever to mention, he would undertake the work. He said to the Confederate agent: "It is useless to expect me to maintain a boat service with you. You must keep the boat on the Virginia side, cross to my beach, and bring and take the mail there, so that I cannot be suspected." He then indicated a post-office in the hollow of an old tree which grew near the foot of his bluff.

His previous observations on the river had shown him that toward evening, when the sun had fallen below the Virginia woods, there was a certain grayness on the surface of the water, increased by the shadows from the high bluffs, which nearly erased the mark of a boat floating on the Potomac. The pickets that were now maintained along the bluffs were not set till toward night. Therefore it was arranged that the Virginia boat should come in just before the pickets were set, and its navigator noiselessly take out the mail from the old tree and deposit the Virginia packet, and then, with scarcely a word whispered or a sign given, slip back again to his Virginia cove. Generally the boat was hauled ashore in Virginia out of the observation of the patrol gun-boats and their launches, and sometimes it was kept back of Grimes's house, but sometimes back of Upper Machodoc Creek, which is six miles due south of Pope's Creek, and only about twelve miles from Port Royal.

When the rebel mail had been left in the stump, Jones obtained it, either in person or by one of his faithful slaves. It is a singular fact that not only were women the best co-operative agents in this spy system, but the slaves, whose interests might be considered as opposed to a Southern triumph, frequently adhered to their masters from discipline or affection. Jones had a slave named Henry Woodland, still alive, who not only pulled in his boat to Virginia during the early months of the war, but, imitating the habits of his master, was discreet down to the time that Booth escaped, while probably suspecting, if he did not know, all that was going on. He and his master seldom informed each other upon anything, and did not need even to exchange glances, so well did they know each other's ways. The negro was nearly a duplicate of his master in methods, went about his work without speech, and asked no questions. Two other negroes, named John Swan and George Murray, pulled oars in Jones's boats in the early part of the war. One of these, it is believed, turned spy upon his master, and finally ran away, but was sent back

to Jones by the commandant of the camp, received a flogging, and some time afterward deserted to a vessel in the river.

When the rebel mail had been put ashore, Jones would sometimes get it by slipping down through some of the wooded gullies cutting the bluff. The Federal patrol walked on the top of the bluff, and as the night grew dark would be apt to avoid these dark places, from which a shot might be fired or an assassin spring. Jones sometimes ran risks getting down the bluff, which was almost perpendicular, and after a time he constructed a sort of stairs or steps down one portion of it. His foster-brother Cox, who was more noisy and expressive, had contrived early in the war a set of post-offices for the deposit of the mail as it came up from the river, in stumps, etc. One of these post-offices was pointed out to me where the railroad now goes through a cutting below Cox's Station. The Maryland neighbors, however, became so careless about sending their letters through these stump post-offices, that when Jones made his agreement with the Confederate Government, he dispensed with that system altogether, and relied upon more ordinary methods. Having no passion for mere glory or praise, contented to do his work according to his own ideas of right and expediency, he merely made use of substantial, plain people, whose hearts were in the Confederate cause, but whose methods were all discreet. Thus he had a young woman to hoist his signal of black, and it never was hoisted if the course was open and clear on the river. He arranged that no mail matter should come close to his home, not even to Port Tobacco, which was perhaps ten miles distant. It was generally sent to Bryantown, fifteen to twenty miles distant, and collected there, or dispatched from that office, and it was carried by such neighbors as Dr. Stowten S. Dent, who died in 1883, at the age of eighty. This old gentleman had two sons in the Confederate army, and was a practicing physician, riding on his horse from place to place, and it seemed to be the case that some person in Major Watson's family was generally sick. There the good old doctor would go, wearing a big overcoat with immense pockets, and big boots coming high toward his knees. Everybody liked him, the Federal officers and soldiers as well as the negroes and neighbors, for he was impartial in his cures. At the greatest risk, even of his neck, the old man carried the rebel mail which Jones had delivered to him, and frequently went all the way to Bryantown with it. He would stuff his pockets, and sometimes his boots, with letters and newspapers.

There were one or two other persons sometimes made available as mail-carriers. Perhaps Mr. Cox himself would do a little work of this kind. A man on the opposite side of the river, by the name of Thomas H. Harbin, who now lives in Washington, was a sort of general voluntary agent for the Confederacy, making his head-quarters now in Washington and now in Richmond, and again on the river bank. In his desire to accommodate everybody, Harbin sometimes put too much matter in the mail; and Jones's cautious soul was much disturbed to find, on one occasion, two large satchels filled with stuff not pertinent to the Confederate Government. He sent word over that there must be more sense in the putting up of that mail, as it would be impossible to get it off if it grew larger.

Jones's house at this time was of dark, rain-washed plank, one story high, with a door in the middle, an outside chimney at each end, and a small kitchen and intervening colonnade which he added himself. The house was about thirty yards from the edge of the bluff. His farm contained five hundred and forty acres. Besides his neighbors the Watsons below, Mr. Thomas Stone had a place just above him, across Pope's Creek, on a high hill, called "Ellenborough," the mansion of which was one of the largest brick buildings in this region. Next above Stone's, on Port Tobacco River, was George Dent, who also had an interesting mansion. The third farm to the north was Brentfield, and back of it Huckleberry, from which Booth departed.

Mr. Jones himself is a man of hardly medium height, slim and wiry, with one of those thin, mournful faces common to tide-water Maryland, with high cheek-bones, gray-blue eyes, no great height or breadth of forehead, and thick, strong hair. The tone of his mind and intercourse is slow and mournful, somewhat complaining, as if the summer heats had given a nervous tone to his views, which are generally instinctive and kind. Judge Frederick Stone told me that he once crossed the river with Jones, when a Federal vessel suddenly loomed up, apparently right above them, and in the twinkling of an eye, the passenger said, he could see the interior of the Old Capitol prison for himself and all his companions; but at that moment Jones was as cool as if he had not noticed the vessel at all, and extricated them in an instant from the danger. Jones's education is small. He does not swear, does not smoke, and does not drink. When he was exposed on the river, he says, he sometimes took a little spirits to drive away the cold and wet; but he has few needs, and probably has not changed any of his habits since early life.

Born poor, somewhat of the overseer class, and struggling toward independence without greed enough ever to accomplish it, he was eminently made to obey instructions and to keep faith. His neighbor Cox was more subtle and influential, and, although he was rough and domineering, seldom failed to bring any man to his views by magnetism or persuasion. Jones's judgment often differed from Cox's, and in the end his courage was altogether superior; but still, from early habits, the humble farmer and fisherman always yielded at last to what Cox insisted upon.

Mr. Jones was not alone in his operations during the war, but he was the only trusted man in Maryland with whom the Confederate Government had an official relation. His very humility was his protection. He impressed the Federal officers and Union men generally as a man of rather slow wits, of an indolent mind, with but little intelligence or interest in what was going on around him. Yet a cunning which had no expression but acts, a devotion which never asked to be appreciated, and perseverance to this day remarkable, were his. Some of his neighbors were running boats across the river for hire or gain. In the little village of Port Tobacco most of the mechanics and loungers had become demoralized by this traffic, and among these was George A. Atzerodt, a coach-maker, of but little moral or physical stamina, who was afterward hanged among the conspirators. This man left his work after the war began, and took to the business of pulling a boat down Port Tobacco River to Virginia. Among the persons who occasionally crossed the river was John H. Surratt, a country boy of respectable aspirations until some time after the breaking out of the war, when he, too, was caught in the meshes of the contraband trade, and, possessing but little mind and too much vanity, was carried away with his importance. Jones went to Richmond once or twice toward the close of the war, and on one of these occasions Surratt and a woman under his care crossed in the same boat. Sometimes these boats would go so heavily laden that a gale on the broad river would almost capsize them. One portion of Jones's business was to put the New York and Northern newspapers every day into Richmond. These newspapers would go to Bryantown post-office, or sometimes to Charlotte Hall post-office, and would generally reach the Potomac near dusk, and being conveyed all night by the Confederate mail-carriers, by way of Port Royal, would be in the hands of the rebel Cabinet next morning, twenty-four hours only after the people in New York were reading them; and Jones says that there was hardly a failure one day in the year to take them through.

The Federal authorities never had a tithe of the thoroughness of suspicion and violation of personal liberty which the Confederates always exercised. Hence the doom of Abraham Lincoln was slowly coming onward through these little country-side beginnings, starting without origin and ending in appalling calamity.

About the third year of the war, Jones understood that a very important act had been agreed upon, namely, to seize the President of the United States in the city of Washington, and by relays and forced horses take him to the west side of Port Tobacco Creek, about four miles below the town of that name, and dispatch him across the Potomac a prisoner of war. I possess the names of the two persons on Port Tobacco Creek who, with their sons, were prominent in this scheme; but the frankness with which the information was given to me persuades me not to print them. A person already named, in Washington, was in the conspiracy; and it was given out that "the big actor, Booth," was also "in it." Jones heard of this about December, 1864. It was not designed that he should take any part in the scheme, though he regarded it as a proper undertaking in time of war. From the time this scheme was proposed until the very end of the war, the bateau which was to carry Mr. Lincoln off was kept ready, and the oars and men were ever near at hand, to dispatch the illustrious captive.

That winter was unusually mild, and therefore the roads were particularly bad in this region of clay and marsh, and did not harden with the frost — a circumstance which perhaps spared Mr. Lincoln the terrors of such a desperate expedition. Inquiries were made from time to time as to when the thing was to be done, and it was generally answered that the roads were too heavy to give the opportunity. The idea Jones has of this matter is that Mr. Lincoln was to be seized, not on his way to the Soldiers' Home, but near the Navy Yard, and gagged quietly, and the carriage then driven across the Navy Yard bridge or the next bridge above, while the captors were to point to the President and wave their hands to the guards on the bridge, saying, "The President of the United States." When we consider that he was finally killed in the presence of a vast audience, and that his captors then crossed the same bridge without opposition and without passes, the original scheme does not seem extraordinary. There is no doubt but that in this original scheme the late Dr. Samuel A. Mudd was to play some part. Booth had

made his acquaintance during that fall or winter on his first visit to the country, and some of Dr. Mudd's relatives admit that he knew Booth well, and probably was in the abduction scheme. The calculation of the conspirators was that the pursuers would have no opportunity to change horses on the way, while the captors would have fresh horses every few miles and drive them to the top of their speed, and all they required was to get to the Potomac River, seven hours distant, a very little in advance. The distance was from thirty-six to thirty-eight miles, and the river could be passed in half an hour or little more with the boat all ready. Jones thinks that this scheme never was given up, until suddenly information came that Booth had killed the President instead of capturing him, and was supposed to be in that region of country. Jones had never seen Booth, and had scarcely any knowledge of him.

When Jones went to Richmond, just before the assassination, it was to collect his stipend, which he had confidingly allowed to accumulate until it amounted to almost twenty-three hundred dollars, presumably for three years' work. He reached Richmond Friday, and called on Charles Caywood, the same who kept the signal camp in the swampy woods back of Grimes's house. The chief signal officer said he would pay five hundred dollars on Saturday, but if Jones would wait till Tuesday the whole amount would be paid him. Jones waited. Sunday night Petersburg fell, and on Monday Richmond was evacuated, so the Confederacy expired without paying him a cent. Moreover, he had invested three thousand dollars in Confederate bonds earlier in the war, paying for them sixty-five cents on the dollar, and keeping them till they were mere brown paper in his hands.

Jones heard of the murder of Lincoln on Saturday afternoon, April 15th, at or near his own farm of Huckleberry. Two Federal officers or cavalrymen came by on horseback, and one of them said to Jones, "Is that your boat a piece above here?" "Yes," said Jones. "Then you had better take good care of it, because there are dangerous people around here who might take it to cross the river." "That is just what I am thinking about," said Jones, "and I have had it pulled up to let my black man go fishing for the shad which are now running." The two horsemen conferred together a minute or two, and one of them said:

"Have you heard the news from Washington?" "No." "Our President has been murdered." "Indeed!" said Jones, with a melancholy face, as if he had no friend left in the world. "Yes," said the horseman; "President Lincoln was killed last night, and we are looking out for the men, who, we think, escaped this way."

On Sunday morning, the 16th of April, about nine o'clock, a young white man came from Samuel Cox's to Jones's second farm, called Huckleberry, which has been already described as about two and a half miles back from the old river residence, which Jones had been forced to give up when it appeared probable that the Confederate cause was lost. The Huckleberry farm consisted of about five hundred acres, and had on it a one-story and garret house, with a low-pitched roof, end chimneys, and door in the middle. There was a stable north of the house, and a barn south of it, and it was only three-quarters of a mile from the house to the river, which here runs to the north to make the indentation called Port Tobacco Creek or river. Although Jones, therefore, had moved some distance from his former house, he was yet very near tide-water. The new farm was much retired, was not on the public road, and consisted of clearings amidst rain-washed hills with deep gullies, almost impenetrable short pines, and some swamp and forest timber. Henry Woodland, the black servant, who was then about twenty-seven years old, was still Jones's chief assistant, and was kept alternately farming and fishing.

The young man who came from Cox's was told, if stopped on the road, to say that he was going to Jones's to ask if he could let Cox have some seed corn, which in that climate is planted early in April. He told Jones that Colonel Cox wished him to come immediately to his house, about three miles to the north. The young man mysteriously intimated that there were very remarkable visitors at Cox's the night before. Accustomed to obey the summons of his old friend, Jones mounted his horse and went to Cox's. The prosperous foster-brother lived in a large two-story house, with handsome piazzas front and rear, and a tall, windowless roof with double chimneys at both ends; and to the right of the house, which faced west, was a long one-story extension, used by Cox for his bedroom. The house is on a slight elevation, and has both an outer and inner yard, to both of which are gates. With its trellis-work and vines, fruit and shade trees, green shutters and dark red roofs, Cox's property, called Rich Hill, made an agreeable contrast to the somber short pines which, at no great distance, seemed to cover the plain almost as thickly as wheat straws in the grain field.

Taking Jones aside, Cox related that on the previous night the assassin of President Lincoln had come to his house in company

with another person, guided by a negro, and had asked for assistance to cross the Potomac River; "and," said Cox to Jones, "you will have to get him across." Cox indicated where the fugitives were concealed, perhaps one mile distant, a few rods west of the present railroad track, and just south of Cox's station. Jones was to give a signal by whistling in a certain way as he approached the place, else he might be fired upon and killed. Nobody, it is believed, ever saw Booth and Herold after this time in Maryland, besides Cox's overseer, Franklin Roby, and Jones. Cox's family protest that the fugitives never entered the house at all; his adopted son, still living, says Booth did not come into the house. Herold, who was with Booth, related to his counsel, as the latter thinks, that after they left Mudd's house they never were in any house whatever in Maryland. The negro who was employed to guide Booth from Dr. Mudd's to Cox's testified that he saw them enter the house; but as the Government did not use him on the trial, it is probable that he related his belief rather than what he saw

But there is no doubt of the fact that when Dr. Mudd found Booth on his hands on Saturday, with a broken ankle, and the soldiery already pouring into Bryantown, he and Booth and Herold became equally frightened, and in the early evening the two latter started by a road to the east for Cox's house, turning Bryantown and leaving it to the north, and arriving about or before midnight at Cox's. There the negro was sent back. Herold advanced to the porch and communicated with Cox, and Booth sat on his horse off toward the outer gate. The two men cursed Cox after they backed out to where the negro was, —he remaining at the outer gate,—and said that Cox was no gentleman and no host. These words were probably intended to mislead the negro when they sent him back to Dr. Mudd's. This negro was arrested, as was a colored woman in Cox's family, and, with the same remarkable fidelity I have mentioned, the woman confronted the negro man and swore that what he said was untrue.

Nevertheless, Booth and Herold were sent into the short pines, and there Jones found them. He says that as he was advancing into the pines he came upon a bay mare, with black legs, mane, and tail, and a white star on the forehead; she was saddled, and roving around in a little cleared place as if trying to nibble something to eat. Jones took the mare and tied her to a tree or stump. He then advanced and gave what he calls the countersign, or whistle, which he does not precisely remember now, though he thinks it was two whistles in a peculiar way, and a whistle after an interval. The first person he saw was Herold, fully armed, and with a carbine in his hand, coming out to see who it was. Jones explained that he had been sent to see them, and was then taken to Booth, who was but a few rods farther along.

Booth was lying on the ground, wrapped up in blankets, with his foot supported and bandaged, and a crutch beside him. His rumpled dress looked respectable for that country, and Jones says it was of black cloth. His face was pale at all times, and never ceased to be so during the several days that Jones saw him. He was in great pain from his broken ankle, which had suffered a fracture of one of the two bones in the leg, down close to the foot. It would not have given him any very great pain but for the exertion of his escape, which irritated it by scraping the ends of the broken bone perhaps in the flesh; it was now highly irritated, and whichever way the man moved he expressed by a twitch or a groan the pain he felt. Jones says that this pain was more or less continuous, and was greatly aggravated by the peril of Booth's situation—unable to cross the river without assistance, and unable to walk any distance whatever. Jones believes that Booth did not rise from the ground at any time until he was finally put on Jones's horse to be taken to the water-side some days afterward.

Booth's first solicitude seemed to be to learn what mankind thought of the crime. That question he put almost immediately to Jones, and continued to ask what different classes of people thought about it. Jones told him that it was gratifying news to most of the men of Southern sympathies. He frankly says that he himself at first regarded it as good news; but somewhat later, when he saw the injurious consequences of the crime to the South, he changed his mind. Booth desired newspapers if they could be had, which would convey to him an idea of public feeling. Jones soon obtained newspapers for him, and continued to send them in; and Booth lay there, where the pines were so thick that one could not see more than thirty or forty feet into them, reading what the world had to say about his case. He seemed never tired of information on this one subject, and the only thing besides he was solicitous about was to get across the river into Virginia.

Jones says Booth admitted that he was the man who killed Lincoln, and expressed no regret for the act, knowing all the consequences it involved. He harped again and again upon the necessity of his crossing the river. He said if he could only get to Virginia he could have medical attendance.

Jones told him frankly that he would receive no medical attendance in Maryland. Said he: "The country is full of soldiers, and all that I can do for you is to get you off, if I can, for Cox's protection and my own, and for your own safety. That I will do for you, if there is any way in the world to do it."

When I received this account from Mr. Jones, I asked him question after question to see if I could extract any information as to what Booth inquired about while in that wilderness. I asked if he spoke of his mother, of where he was going when he reached Virginia, of whether he meant to act on the stage again; whether he blamed himself for jumping from the theater box; whether he expressed any apprehensions for Mrs. Surratt or his friends in Washington. To these and to many other questions Jones uniformly replied: "No, he did not speak about any of those things. He wanted food, and to cross the river, and to know what was said about the deed." Booth, he thinks, wore a slouched hat. At first meeting Booth in the pines, he proved himself to be the assassin by showing upon his wrist, in India ink, the initials J. W. B. He showed the same to Captain Jett in Virginia. Jones says Booth was a determined man, not boasting, but one who would have sold his life dear. He said he would not be taken alive.

Mr. Jones went up to Port Tobacco in a day or two to hear about the murder, and heard a detective there from Alexandria say: "I will give one hundred thousand dollars and guarantee it to the man who can tell where Booth is." When we consider that the end of the war had come, and all the Confederate hopes were blasted and every man's slaves set free, we may reflect upon the fidelity of this poor man, whose land was not his own, and with inevitable poverty before him perhaps for the rest of his days, when the next morning he was told that to him alone would be intrusted that man for whom the Government had offered a fortune, and was increasing the reward. Mr. Jones says it never occurred to him for one moment that it would be a good thing to have that money. On the contrary, his sympathies were enlisted for the pale-faced young man, so ardent to get to Virginia and have the comforts of a doctor.

Said he to Booth: "You must remain right here, however long, and wait till I can see some way to get you out; and I do not believe I can get you away from here until this hue and cry is somewhat over. Meantime I will see that you are fed." He then continued to visit them daily, generally about ten o'clock in the morning. He always went alone, taking with him such food as the country had—ham, whisky, bread, fish, and coffee. Part of the way Jones had to go by the public road, but he generally worked into the pines as quickly as possible. His intercourse at each visit with the fugitives was short, because he was in great personal danger himself, was not inquisitive, and was wholly intent on keeping his faith with his old friend and the new ones. He says that Herold had nothing to say of the least importance, and was nothing but a pilot for Booth. Not improbably Cox sent his own overseer into the pines sometimes to see these men or to give them something, but he took no active part in their escape. The blankets they possessed came either from Cox's or from Dr. Mudd's.

Booth, as has been said, rode a small bay mare from the rear of Ford's Theater to Cox's pines. Herold rode a horse of another color. These horses were hired at different livery stables in Washington. Jones is not conversant with all the facts about the shooting of these horses, but the testimony of Cox before he died was nearly as follows: After Booth entered the pines he distinctly heard, the next day or the day following, a band of cavalry going along the road at no great distance, and the neighing of their horses. He said to Herold: "If we can hear those horses, they can certainly hear the neighing of ours, which are uneasy from want of food and stabling." When Jones on Sunday morning came through the woods and found one of the horses loose, he told Cox, as well as Booth, that the horses ought to be put out of the way. Cox had Herold advised to take the horses down into Zekiah Swamp, and shoot them both with his revolver, which he did.

The weather during those days and nights was of a foggy, misty character—not cold, but uncomfortable, although there was no rain. At regular intervals the farmer got on his horse and went through the pines the two or three miles to the spot where still lay the yearning man with the great crime behind him and the great wish to see Virginia. Booth had a sympathetic nature, and seldom failed to make a good impression; and that he made this impression on Jones will presently appear. No incident broke the monotony of these visits for days. Jones sent his faithful negro out with the boat to fish with gill-nets, so that it should not be broken up in the precautions used by the Federals to prevent Booth's escape. Jones was now reduced to one poor boat, which had cost him eighteen dollars in Baltimore. He had lost several boats in the war, costing him from eighty to one hundred and twenty-five dollars apiece. This little gray or lead-colored skiff was the only

means by which the fugitives could get across the river. Every evening the man returned it to the mouth of the little gut or marsh called Dent's Meadow, in front of the Huckleberry farm. This is not two miles north of Pope's Creek, and from that spot Booth and Herold finally escaped.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday passed by, and more soldiers came in and began to ride hither and thither, and to examine the marshes; but they did not penetrate the pines at all, which at no time were visited. The houses were all examined, and old St. Thomas's brick buildings, of a venerable and imposing appearance, above Chapel Point, were ransacked. The story went abroad that there were vaults under the priests' house, leading down to the river, and finally the soldiers tore the farm and terraces all to pieces. Yet for six nights and days Booth and Herold kept in the woods, and on Friday Jones slipped over to a little settlement called Allen's Fresh, two or three miles from his farm, to see if he could hear anything. A large body of cavalry were in the little town, guided by a Marylander, and while Jones in his indifferent way was loitering about, he heard the officer say: "We have just got news that those fellows have been seen down in St. Mary's County." The cavalry were ordered to mount and set out. At that time it was along toward the gray of the night, and instantly Jones mounted his horse and rode from Allen's Fresh by the road and through the woods to where Booth and Herold were.

Said he, with decision: "Now, friends, this is your only chance. The night is pitch dark and my boat is close by. I will get you some supper at my house, and send you off if I can." With considerable difficulty, and with sighs and pain, Booth was lifted on to Jones's horse, and Herold was put at the bridle. "Now," whispered Jones, "as we cannot see twenty yards before us, I will go ahead. We must not speak. When I get to a point where everything is clear from me to you, I will whistle so," giving the whistle. In that way he went forward through the blackness, repeating the signal now and then; and although the wooded paths are generally tortuous and obstructed, nothing happened. For a short distance they were on the public road; they finally turned into the Huckleberry farm, and about fifty yards from the house the assassin and his pilot stopped under two pear-trees.

At this moment a very pathetic incident took place. Jones whispered to Booth: "Now I will go in and get something for you to eat, and you eat it here while I get something for myself." Booth, with a sudden longing, exclaimed: "Oh, can't I go in the house just a moment and get a little of your warm coffee?" Jones says that he felt the tears come to his eyes when he replied: "Oh, my friend, it would not be safe. This is your last chance to get away. I have negroes at the house; and if they see you, you are lost and so am I." But Jones says, as he went in, he felt his throat choked. To this day he remembers that wistful request of the assassin to be allowed to enter a warm habitation once more before embarking on the wide and unknown river.

The negro, Henry Woodland, was in the kitchen stolidly taking his meal, and neither looking nor asking any questions, though he must have suspected from the occurrences of a few days past that something was in the wind. "Henry," said Jones, "did you bring the boat back to Dent's meadow where I told you?" "Yes, master." "How many shad did you catch, Henry?" "I caught about seventy, master." "And you brought them all here to the house, Henry?" "Yes, master."

Jones then took his supper without haste, and rejoined the two men. It was about three-quarters of a mile to the water-side, and, although it was very dark, they kept on picking their way down through the ravine, where a little, almost dry stream ran off to the marshes. Not far from the water-side was a strong fence, which they were unable to take down.

Booth was now lifted from the horse by Herold and Jones, and they got under his arms, he with the crutch at hand, and so they nearly carried him to the water. The boat could be got by a little wading, and Jones brought it in. Booth took his place in the stern. He was heavily armed, and Jones says had not only his carbine, as had Herold, but revolvers and a knife. Herold took the oars, which had been left in the boat, and sat amidships. Jones then lighted a piece of candle which he had brought with him, and took a compass which Booth had brought out from Washington, and by the aid of the candle he showed Booth the true direction to steer. Said he: "Keep the course I lay down for you, and it will bring you right into Machodoc Creek. Row up the creek to the first house, where you will find Mrs. Quesenberry, and I think she will take care of you if you use my name."

They were together at the water-side an unknown time, from fifteen minutes to half an hour. At last Booth, with his voice full of emotion, said to Jones: "God bless you, my dear friend, for all you have done for me." The last words Jones thinks Booth said were: "Good-bye, old fellow!" There was a moment's sound of oars on the water, and the fugitives were gone.

For the danger and the labor of those six days Jones received from Booth seventeen dollars in greenbacks, or a little less than the cost of the boat which Jones had to surrender forever. Booth had about three hundred dollars in his possession, and he told Jones that he was poor, and intimated that he would give him a check or draft on some one, or on some bank. "No," said Jones; "I don't want your money. I want to get you away for your own safety and for ours."

It was not until months after this that Jones ascertained that the fugitives did not succeed in crossing the river that Friday night. They struck the flood tide in a few minutes, were inexperienced in navigating, and when they touched the shore sometime that night and discovered a house near by, to which Herold made his way, the latter saw something familiar about the place, he knowing all that country well. It was the residence of Colonel John J. Hughes, near Nanjemoy Stores, in Maryland, directly west of Pope's Creek, about eight or nine miles. The Potomac is here so wide, and has so many broad inlets, that in the darkness the Virginia shore and the Maryland shore seem the same. Herold went to the house and asked for food, and said that Booth was in the marsh near by, where they had pulled up the boat out of observation. The good man of the house was much disturbed, but gave Herold food, and it is supposed that after lying concealed that day they pushed off again in the evening, and this time successfully made the passage of the river, though they had to come back twelve to fourteen miles. The keeper of the house at Nanjemoy became frightened after they left, and rode into Port Tobacco and told his lawyer of the circumstance, who took him at once before a Federal officer.

Some time on Sunday morning, the ninth morning after the assassination, the fugitives got to Machodoc Creek, at Mrs. Quesenberry's, with whom they left the boat. It is not sure that they entered her house, but they went to the house of a man named Bryan on the next farm, and probably revealed themselves. Bryan next day took them to the summer-house of Dr. Richard Stewart, which is two or three miles back in the country. This Dr. Stewart was the richest man in King George County, Virginia, and had a very large brick house at Mathias Point on the river; but on account of the malaria and heat he went in summer to a large barn-like mansion back in the woodlands, a queer, strange house two stories high, with a broad passage. He was entertaining some friends just returned from the Confederate service, and was much annoyed to find that on his place were the assassins of President Lincoln, after the war was all over. The men were not invited into the house, but were sent to an out-building of some kind, either the negro quarters or the barn; and Booth was so much chagrined at this welcome to Virginia that he took the diary which was found on his dead body and wrote a letter in lead pencil to Dr. Stewart, sorrowful rather than angry, saying that he would not take hospitality extended in that way without paying for it, and sending three dollars.

Booth procured a conveyance, or one was procured for him, from Dr. Stewart's to Port Conway: it was driven by a negro named Lucas. He probably spent Sunday in Bryan's house, and got to Dr. Stewart's house, it is said, on Monday, where he asked for breakfast, and the same day reached the Rappahannock River and went across with Captain Jett. This crossing was made on Monday, the twenty-fourth of April. That afternoon he was lodged at Garrett's farm three miles back. He spent the next day at this house and slept in the barn. Being informed that a large body of Federal cavalry had gone up the road this Tuesday, he became much distressed. On Wednesday morning, soon after midnight, the cavalry returned, guided by Captain Jett. The barn was set afire and Booth shot soon after three o'clock in the morning. He died a little after sunrise on Wednesday.

I may recapitulate Booth's diary during those days as Jones has indicated it. At ten o'clock Friday night, April 14th, Booth shot the President. A little after midnight he was at Surratt's tavern, where he received his carbine and whisky. (I forgot to say that, among the articles of comfort given to Booth by Jones when he went to the boat, was a bottle of whisky.) In gray dawn of Saturday morning Booth was at Dr. Mudd's, where he had his leg set, and a laboring white man there whittled him a crutch. On Saturday night, near midnight, he was at Cox's house, and some time between that and morning was lodged in the pines, where he remained Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; and Friday night, between eight and nine o'clock, he started on the boat, spent Saturday in Nanjemoy Creek, and arrived some time Saturday night or before light on Sunday at Mrs. Quesenberry's. It is understood that on the Virginia side he was welcomed by two men named Harbin and Joseph Badden, the latter of whom is dead. The boat in which Booth crossed the river he gave Mrs. Quesenberry, who was arrested. The boat was put on a war vessel and probably carried to Washington.

A few days after Booth crossed the river and had been killed, suspicion turned upon both Jones and Cox. The negro who had taken the fugitives to Cox's gate gave information. Negroes near Jones's farm said he had recently concealed men, and showed the officers a sort of litter or camp about two hundred yards from his house. Here, in reality, quite a different fugitive had hidden some time before. Jones looked at it in his mournful way, and expressed the opinion that it was nothing but where a hog had been penned up. He was arrested and taken to Bryantown, and kept there eight days in the second story of the tavern where Booth had stopped, and in sight of the country Catholic church where Booth first met Dr. Mudd and others, six months before. Cox was there, but was in two or three days sent to Washington. The detectives from all the cities of the East sat in the street under Jones, and described how he was to be hanged. He remarks of Colonel Wells: "He were a most bloodthirsty man, and tried to scare out of me just what I'm tellin' of you now." In eight days Jones was sent to the old Carroll prison, Washington. There he contrived to communicate with Cox, who was completely broken in spirit, and told him by no means to admit anything; and when Jones, in about a month, saw Swan, the negro witness, going past his window toward the Navy Yard bridge with a satchel, Jones said to Cox: "You have nothing to fear." The Government soon released these men, who indeed had taken no part in Mr. Lincoln's death, though they may have been accomplices after the fact. Jones was kept six and Cox seven weeks.

Mr. Jones is married again, and now has ten children. He has filled some places under the Maryland and Baltimore political governments, and now keeps a coal, wood, and feed yard in North Baltimore.

George Alfred Townsend.

EVENING.

I.

It is that pale, delaying hour
When Nature closes like a flower,
And in the spirit hallowed lies
The silence of the earth and skies.

The world has thoughts she will not own
When shades and dreams with night have flown;
Bright overhead, the early star
Makes golden guesses what they are.

II.

A light lies here, a shadow there,
With little winds at play between;
As though the elves were delving where
The sunbeams vanished in the green.

The softest clouds are flocking white
Among faint stars with centers gold,—
Slowly from daisied fields of night,
Heaven's shepherd fills his airy fold.

John Vance Cheney.