hundreds of great gatherings. The thousands of people who filled a large grove and ran over into the surrounding fields were all fed, and there was no mean variety on the tables. I dare not estimate the number of beeves roasted whole in the barbecue style. Deep pits, looking like fresh-made graves, were half filled with wood fires, and o
the carcass of a bee
ing slowly. There
tables, made of rou
cutting of the loave
gry multitude was
scores of men. A
grounds were hogsl
wash-tubs of lemon
vals were speakers' stands at which orators spouted patriotism, with grateful interruptions from brass-bands and glee-clubs. There were no street railways then, and most of the vast crowd of heated and tired people, including faint women and fretful children, walked the long dusty road back to town, with no apparent loss of enthusiasm. Far into the night could be heard the mounted men singing the glee choruses and
campaign cries,
quiet with their
.

The Century Magazine
Vol LXXXV No 4
February, 1913

Mr. Lincoln,
on at Washing-
old friends, and
orgotten in the
rumming until
tragedy in the
grand review of the returning volunteers at Washington. In this tragedy Colonel Ellsworth was the war's first conspicuous victim; Lincoln himself the last.

Miss PORTERFIELD

A NEW STORY OF LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

AN UNPUBLISHED RECORD OF AN EYE-WITNESS

BY JESSE W. WEIK

THE list of the world's great plays is not complete; one yet remains to be written. Portrayed with characteristic and moving emphasis, it will perpetuate and immo talize the most eventful incident in history, for its central figure will be clothed in the tall form and look through the mirthful but melancholy eyes of Abraham Lincoln. In it, as in Shakspere's "Julius Cæsar," not the least impressive of its varied and manifold scenes will be the tragedy of the assassination.

A profound and absorbing interest will always attach to the event at Ford's Theater not alone because of its dramatic setting and vivid accessories, but because of its momentous effect upon the destiny and development of a great nation. What might have happened had not the assassin's bullet crashed through Lincoln's brain opens up a field of speculation so wide and extensive that one cannot mark its boundaries.

It is probably true that the original plot of John Wilkes Booth did not contemplate the destruction of Lincoln's life. In fact, it is now known that while in New York early in January, 1865, Booth invited another actor, Samuel Knapp Chester, to join him in what the former insisted was an enterprise of momentous proportions, but which turned out to be simply a scheme to "capture the heads of the Government in Washington, including the President, and spirit them away to Richmond." At what time the plot was amended to include assassination cannot now be accurately determined. Frederick Stone, the lawyer who defended Booth's accomplice, David Herold, in his trial before the military commission at Washington in May, 1865, in after years related an incident, communicated by his client, which may throw some light on this phase of the question. Herold said that he and Booth were standing side by side in front

of the White House on the evening of April 11, and heard Mr. Lincoln deliver his last public address. The building and grounds were brilliantly illuminated, and everybody was more or less jubilant over the evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond and the surrender at Appomattox. When the President, after reciting the recent victories of the Union arms, indicated that he favored the elective franchise for the colored man, "especially the very intelligent and those who have served our cause as soldiers in the field," Booth grasped Herold's arm and exclaimed in a stage-whisper: "That means Nigger citizenship. Now, by —— I 'll put him through!" Whatever, therefore, may have been Booth's original design, it is apparent that from this time forth nothing short of Lincoln's death would have satisfied him.

The investigation and trial of the Lincoln conspirators by the military commission at Washington was so thorough and conclusive that virtually nothing new or material has been discovered since that tribunal pronounced its final judgment. Clothed with arbitrary and unusual powers, the commission was a veritable dragnet, sweeping everything before it and exhausting every possible source of information. In addition, almost every surviving witness of the tragedy in the theater has, in one way or another, been heard from, so that we can scarcely hope to gain much material light on the subject beyond what we already have.

Before the case is closed, however, and with a view to adding a belated contribution to the store of matter we have thus far accumulated regarding this great historical tragedy, I venture to introduce a witness whose testimony has until now never been made public. This witness, whose death occurred not long since and whose acquaintance I made soon after the close of the Civil War, was a lady who had come to my home town in Indiana—Greencastle—to visit a relative, Colonel George D. Blakey, a commanding and impressive gentleman of the old school, then recently removed from Kentucky. While a member of Colonel Blakey's household, Miss Porterfield—for that was the lady's name—was wooed and won by William A. Brown, a young lawyer then serving as the mayor of our town. The marriage took place May 29, 1872.

Soon after my first meeting with Miss Porterfield I learned that she was an acquaintance of John Wilkes Booth, and also that she had witnessed the assassination of Lincoln. In due time I heard her tell the story, and was so deeply interested that I secured from her a promise to put it in writing. This, however, was for various reasons deferred from time to time till about twenty years ago, when, in answer to my oft-repeated importunities, she fulfilled her promise, signed the manuscript, and turned it over to me "for suppression or publication," to use her own language, as I might deem best. Since it was delivered to me, the manuscript has never been out of my hands, and now, in the belief that the public is entitled to the facts, I submit her account:

"In the winter of 1864–65 I was attending school at a convent in New York not far from West Point, where my stepfather, Patrice de Janon, was instructor of Spanish at the United States Military Academy. My mother, desiring to visit some friends in Washington, decided to take me with her, and we spent a part of the months of March and April enjoying the gaiety of the national capital. One of my most intimate friends was a girl who lived with her parents at the National Hotel, and I therefore spent a good deal of my time with her. Among the persons about the hotel with whom I became acquainted was John Wilkes Booth, the actor, who had already made something of a name for himself on the stage. He was a very attractive man, winning and soft-voiced, and more or less of a favorite among those who lived in or frequented the hotel. With a fine head, a figure handsomely proportioned from the waist upward, and graceful and easy manners, he soon fascinated me and my girl friend. On several occasions I heard him recite in the parlor, and his recitations never failed to attract and impress those who happened to hear him. I remember his rendition of 'Beautiful Snow' and Poe's 'Raven,' as well as numerous plays with which he was familiar. He often talked to me and my companion, and, knowing that we were school-girls, tried to impress us with the need of speaking clearly and understandingly; and on one occasion asked us to read a few lines from Shakspere's 'Henry VIII,' carefully criticizing our

expression and accent as we read. Although we were mere misses, he treated us with the utmost deference and respect, and we finally became so well acquainted with him that he gave each of us his photograph, signed by himself.

"A few days after our arrival in Washington, my mother and I were members of a party that attended Ford's Theater and witnessed a benefit performance for John McCullough. Booth played the part of *Pescara,* and it seemed to me he was applauded more than any one else in the play. The audience was unusually demonstrative, stamping the floor, cheering, and otherwise manifesting its appreciation of his acting. McCullough came before the curtain, but, notwithstanding the marked demonstration in his behalf, Booth refused to respond.

"After the news of the fall of Richmond and the surrender at Appomattox reached Washington, the people manifested their thankfulness and exultation by decorating their homes, and illuminating their windows with lighted candles after nightfall. In the morning of the day prior to the assassination I happened to meet Mr. Booth on Pennsylvania Avenue. My objective point was a little shop farther down the street, where I intended to buy some candy. Booth understood me to say *candles,* they being in great demand at that time for illuminating purposes. It was rather early in the morning, and the man had evidently not been out of bed very long.

" 'What do you want with more candles?' he exclaimed. 'The windows are full of them now, and when they are lighted I wish they would burn every house to the ground. I would rejoice at the sight. I guess I 'm a little desperate this morning,' he continued, 'and, do you know, I feel like mounting my horse and tearing up and down the streets, waving a Rebel flag in each hand, till I have driven the poor animal to death.'

"I felt that something was wrong with the man, he was so deeply wrought up. Fortunately for him, however, no one happened to be near enough to hear. His excited and vehement speech startled me, and I was on the point of remonstrating with him for his violent and intemperate utterance when he interrupted me with the rather blunt inquiry:

" 'Don't you study Latin at school?'

"I answered in the affirmative, whereupon he continued:

" 'Then tell me this: is *tyrannis* spelled with two *n's* or two *r's?*'

"I don't remember now just how I answered,—of course I gave him the benefit of my recollection and judgment,—but I do remember that the question, coming so abruptly and unsuggested by anything either of us had been saying, was most singular and unusual. Meanwhile I ventured to inquire the reason for such a violent display of feeling. Thereupon he explained that his irritation was due to having been rudely awakened from sleep that morning by a man—I think he called him Surratt—who wanted to borrow his horse to ride to Georgetown; that waking him early always made him cross and refractory. His horse being in the livery-stable, it required an order for another to use him, and rather than take the trouble to write the order, he had thrown the man a bill, telling him to take the money and hire a horse.

"The day following this incident it was decided by my mother and the Stewarts, the family we were visiting, to attend Ford's Theater again. The play was 'Our American Cousin,' then very popular; but I am not sure but as great an attraction was the opportunity to see General Grant and his wife, who, along with the President and Mrs. Lincoln it was announced, would be present. We were seated in the parquet, not far from the orchestra. I remember that at one time during the evening I saw Booth in the auditorium of the theater, standing near the wall, the sweep of his gaze indicating that he was looking for some face in the audience. Sometime later we heard the report of a pistol-shot, followed almost immediately by Booth's dramatic leap from the President's box. I remember vividly the gleam of his dagger as he descended to the stage. I heard him shout something; but, as his face was first directed toward the stage, I could not clearly distinguish his words. Of course the latter were 'Sic semper tyrannis,' followed instantly by the exclamation, 'The South is avenged!' As the last expression was uttered as he arose, this time with his eyes toward the audience, I had no difficulty in distinguishing it. For an instant, before any one either

in the audience or on the stage could comprehend what had happened, everybody stood as though transfixed; but when the awful announcement swiftly followed, 'The President is shot!' a wave of indescribable tumult broke loose.

"The crowd behind us surged forward, and before long our party found itself wedged against the orchestra. As I was somewhat shorter in stature than those about me, my mother, fearing for my safety, undertook to lift me up on the stage; but the pressure from behind became so great that she was unable to extricate me. I might have been injured, I suppose, but for the effort of a somewhat muscular man near by who, realizing my mother's predicament, picked me up and literally threw me over the footlights upon the stage. I could not see the President, but I could see Mrs. Lincoln and hear her shrieks and moans, as well as the loud and turbulent cries of people all over the house. The effect of this bewildering excitement on me was almost instantaneous. I grew deathly sick, and my face must have betrayed me, for the actor who personated *Lord Dundreary*, E. A. Emerson, noticing me and fearful lest I should faint, took off his wig and fanned me vigorously. People were rapidly clambering upon and filling the stage, when some well-intentioned person, seeing me in the surging mass and anxious to put me out of harm's way, lifted me into the box immediately beneath the one in which the stricken President lay. But so many persons had crowded into the box above that it was feared the floor might give way under the great weight, and I accordingly was soon removed from my place of refuge. The actors and actresses and other women on the stage stood huddled together in little groups, quivering with excitement and fear. The whole scene, with its confusion, its grief and tears and terror, was indescribable. Apparently the only cool head among all those in the play or on the stage was Laura Keene. She seemed to comprehend sooner than any one else what had happened, and swept across the stage toward the President's box, waving her hands aloft and shouting a command which sounded like, 'Order! Order!' or 'Water! Water!' I could not tell which. In due time she reached the upper box, and I remember seeing her there bending over and apparently fanning the stricken President's face. Although at this late day much of what occurred then seems like a dream, still I can never forget the noise, the confusion, the screams, the absolute and revolting horror of it all. In a short time policemen and soldiers made their appearance in the building, the body of the dying President was tenderly borne away.

"A day or so later my girl companion and I happened to pass the theater and, noticing the doors open, ventured inside. There we found a small crowd of persons on the lower floor, some of whom were in the act of leaving the building. They told us they had just finished listening to a rehearsal of the play 'Our American Cousin,' and that it had been ascertained that the part being rendered when Booth committed his awful deed was that particular portion of the play when the stage would be freest of people and scenery, so as to permit of easy and unobstructed passage across it, thus indicating how carefully the assassin had studied his plans."

ALONG THE ROAD

BY ROBERT BROWNING HAMILTON

I WALKED a mile with Pleasure.
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But, oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me!