LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

TOLD BY AN EYE-WITNESS

THE letter which follows was written on the date given, by Miss Julia Adelaide Shepard, now living in Ogdensburg, New York. Miss Shepard is an aunt of the artist, Mr. Charles S. Chapman, through whose good offices we are enabled to make it public for the first time.—THE EDITOR.

"Hopeton" near Washington,
April 16th, 1865.

DEAR FATHER:—It is Friday night and we are at the theatre. Cousin Julia has just told me that the President is in yonder upper right hand private box so handsomely decked with silken flags festooned over a picture of Washington. The young and lovely daughter of Senator Harris is the only one of the party we can see, as the flags hide the rest. But we know that "Father Abraham" is there; like a father watching what interests his children, for their pleasure rather than his own. It has been announced in the papers he would be there. How sociable it seems, like one family sitting around their parlor fire. How different this from the pomp and show of monarchial Europe. Every one has been so jubilant for days, since the surrender of Lee, that they laugh and shout at every clownish witticism. One of the actresses, whose part is that of a very delicate young lady, talks of wishing to avoid the draft, when her lover tells her "not to be alarmed for there is no more draft," at which the applause is long and loud. The American cousin has just been making love to a young lady, who says she will never marry but for love, yet when her mother and herself find he has lost his property they retreat in disgust at the left of the stage, while the American cousin goes out at the right. We are waiting for the next scene.

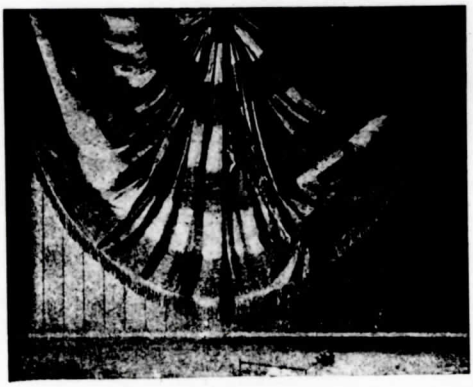
The report of a pistol is heard. . . . Is it all in the play? A man leaps from the President's box, some ten feet, on to the stage. The truth flashes upon me. Brandishing a dagger he shrieks out "The South is avenged," and rushes through the scenery. No one stirs. "Did you hear what he said, Julia? I believe he has killed the President." Miss Harris is wringing her hands and calling for water. Another instant and the stage is crowded—officers, policemen, actors and citizens. "Is there a surgeon in the house?" they say. Several rush forward and with superhuman efforts climb up to the box. Minutes are hours, but see! they are bringing him out. A score of strong arms bear Lincoln's loved form along. A glimpse of a ghastly face is all as they pass along. . . . Major Rathbone, who was of their party, springs forward to support [Mrs. Lincoln], but cannot. What is it? Yes, he too has been stabbed. Somebody says "Clear the house," so every one else repeats "Yes, clear the house." So slowly one party after another steals out. There is no need to hurry. On the stairs we stop aghast and with shuddering lips—"Yes, see, it is our President's blood" all down the stairs and out upon the pavement. It seemed sacrilege to step near. We are in the street now. They have taken the President into the house opposite. He is alive, but mortally wounded. What are those people saying. "Secretary Seward and his son have had their throats cut in their own house." Is it so? Yes, and the murderer of our President has escaped through a back alley where a swift horse stood awaiting him. Cavalry come dashing up the street and stand with drawn swords before yon house. Too late! too late! What mockery armed men are now. Weary with the weight of woe the moments drag along and for hours delicate women stand clinging to the arms of their protectors, and strong men throw their arms around each

other's necks and cry like children, and passing up and down enquire in low agonized voices "Can he live? Is there no hope?" They are putting out the street lamps now. "What a shame! not now! not to-night!" There they are lit again. Now the guard with drawn swords forces the crowd backward. Great, strong Cousin Ed says "This unnerves me; let 's go up to Cousin Joe's." We leave Julia and her escort there and at brother Joe's gather together in an upper room and talk and talk with Dr. Webb and his wife who were at the theatre. Dr. W. was one of the surgeons who answered the call. He says "I asked Dr. —— when I went in what it was, and putting his hand on mine he said, 'There!' I looked and it was 'brains.' "

After a while Julia and Mr. W. came in and still we talked and listened to the cavalry rushing through the echoing street. Joe was determined to go out, but his wife could n't endure the thought of any one going out of the house. It was only in the early hours of the dawn that the gentlemen went to lie down, but Julia sat up in a rocking chair and I lay down on the outside of the bed beside Cousin Ginny for the rest of the night, while Cousin Joe and his wife's young brother sat nodding in their chairs opposite. There were rooms waiting for us but it seemed safer to be together. He was still living when we came out to Hopeton, but we had scarcely choked down our breakfast next morning when the tolling bells announced the terrible truth.

Last Thursday evening we drove to the city, and all along our route the city was one blaze of glorious light. From the humble cabin of the contraband to the brilliant White House light answered light down the broad avenue. The sky was ablaze with bursting rockets. Calcium lights shone from afar on the public buildings. Bonfires blazed in the streets and every device that human Yankee ingenuity could suggest in the way of mottoes and decoration made noon of midnight. Then as the candles burned low and the rockets ceased, we drove home through the balmy air and it seemed as though Heaven smiled upon the rejoicings, and Nature took up the illumination with a glory of moonlight that transcended all art.

To-day I have been to church through the same streets and the suburbs with the humble cottages that were so bright that night shone through the murky morning, heavy with black hangings, and on and on, down the streets only the blackness of darkness. The show of mourning was as universal as the glorying had been, and when we were surrounded by the solemn and awe-stricken congregation in the church, it seemed as though my heart had stopped beating. I feel like a frightened child. I wish I could go home and have a good cry. I can't bear to be alone. You will hear all this from the papers, but I can't help writing it for things seen are mightier than things heard. It seems hard to write now. I dare not speak of our great loss. Sleeping or waking, that terrible scene is before me.



THE FLAG THAT WAS DRAPED IN FRONT OF THE THEATER BOX IN WHICH LINCOLN WAS SHOT

The rent in the flag was made by the spurs on the riding-boots of the assassin, which caught in this flag as he jumped from the box to the stage.