Monday morning Lincoln's call for 75,000 men flashed over the wires. Ignatious Anders, a manly handsome young fellow of 18, left our farm to join the La Cross Light Guard, which left for Camp Randall, under Capt. Colwell, during the first week of May, to become Co. B of the Second infantry, one of the regiments of the famous Iron Brigade. Other men whom I knew and many more whose names were familiar were in that company, and as I followed closely and anxiously the news of the battles, and pored over the heroic deeds of our men, in the local newspapers and in The Chicago Tribune, and studied the war pictures and portraits in Harper's Weekly, my heart would always thrill and beat faster if I found mention of the gallant Second, or of its officers or men. Later, the First battery and the Fourteenth and the Twenty-fifth infantry regiments shared my boyish interest and enthusiasm, for La Crosse county was well represented in each of them.

The Twenty-fifth had been mustered in La Crosse, and I had seen for the first time 1,000 men under the command of officers who were all near neighbors. Col. Montgomery had lived in La Crosse. Maj. "Jerry" Rusk had driven the La Crosse and Viroqua stage, and so the roll might be called.

On May 2 father wrote to an aunt in Maine:

"You say you hear nothing from the west. The president called for one regiment from Wisconsin. It has gone, and five more are ready to move at a moment's notice."

To this my mother added:

"We had already heard from Maine through the papers and we are rather surprised that you doubt the war spirit of the great northwest. Here not only the men but the women are ready to fight. I hope the war will last 'til the slave question is settled forever; 'til we hear no more of compromise or concessions. I'd rather all my friends should go to battle than see the republic subverted by southern traitors. I believe there is still a God in Israel."

These are but examples of the early outbursts of patriotic fervor that filled all northern hearts.

WAR BURDEN BLANKETS HOMES

But, all too soon, the grim sense of a sustained and prolonged struggle forced itself upon the people. Homes were now frequently wrapped in sorrow and draped in mourning. The handsome youths of gallant leave-taking a few months earlier, smart fellows who had marched gayly and proudly away to the inspiring beat of martial music, were every now and then coming home with an empty trousers leg, an empty sleeve, or showing their youth swept on to swift old age by disease or the tortures of a southern prison pen.

When news came in September, 1862, that "Nace" Anders, my friend and hero, whose promotion from the ranks I had confidently expected, had fallen at Antietam, it was a personal affliction. The horrors of war were no longer impersonal and far away. I felt it as the loss of a brother.

What were the most solemn verities of war, came, however, with greatest realism, in the letters of an aunt, Miss Rebecca Randall Usher, a sweet, courageous soul who served almost three years in hospital and field. In 1912 she claimed fulfillment of the promise made to the good and faithful servant.

After experience as a hospital nurse at Chester, Pa., Aunt Rebecca had gone to the front where women were very few, in January, 1865, as assistant in charge of the Maine state agency at City Point. Here she remained with Grant until after Lee surrendered.

MEMORY OF THE CORDIAL PRESIDENT

On her way down the Potomac, on Jan. 19, on board the United States transport Vanderbilt, she wrote home. An experience in Washington, enroute, she relates as follows:

"We went to Mrs. Lincoln's levee, and when I shook hands with the president, he said, 'How do you do, dear?' in his most kindly manner, while he shook hands with the most indifferent air possible."

This warmth of word and manner was, doubtless, to be explained by the fact that she had stood a little apart for some minutes, watching the president intently, and the manifest deep interest and admiration which she felt had caught his eye before she appeared in the moving line of guests to shake his hand. This was one of the most sacred experiences of her life and was always referred to with affecting warmth and enthusiasm. It was as if she had received a blessing, a special dispensation of approval and regard.

Two scraps of her letters will serve to show that she was doing military duty. On Feb. 20, she wrote:

"Here I am, at last, fairly on my way to City Point, the only woman on a boat crowded with men. If you were here with me we would go outside and look at the scenery, but it is such a labor to get through the men—and the floor is so covered with tobacco juice—that I shall hardly undertake it again until dinner time when I hope the crowd will be sufficiently diminished to leave one free passage."

From City Point she wrote:

"Have just received the glorious news that Sherman is in Charleston. (The rumor proved to be false.—Editor.) I felt like throwing up my hat and giving three times three and a tiger. But as Mrs. Mayhew and I concluded that would hardly be dignified for state agents, we contented ourselves with announcing it to all the soldiers as they came into the reading room, and congratulating them. We are expecting to go to Richmond soon."

HEAVENS TESTIFY AT SECOND INAUGURAL

At the second inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, on Mar. 4, 1865, Aunt Rebecca joined my father in Washington, coming up for a furlough and a visit. There were other ladies there with their husbands and it made a merry party. Everybody felt then that the war was rapidly drawing to an inevitable close and, though bloody work was still doing, there were rifts in the clouds and hope was dawning. Here is her account of Lincoln's second inauguration:

"It rained very hard and was so dark we had the gas lighted in the parlor. At 10:30 we started for the capitol in our old clothes, prepared for a rainy day. On the capitol steps I noticed a line of light around the western horizon and I pointed it out to my brother, remarking that in Maine we should consider that a sign of fair weather. But he saw no promise in it, saying it would take more than one day for that faint streak of light to cover the heavens.

"The house adjourned at 12 and a doorkeeper, who was an old acquaintance of my brother's, took us through a committee room and let us through the window to the balcony where the president was to speak. In a few moments the judges of the supreme court and other dignitaries appeared, followed by Mr. Lincoln.

"Just at the moment when the president stepped out from beneath the shelter of the capitol onto the balcony, the sun, which, deaf to all the importunities of the crowds of sovereigns that thronged the city, had refused to shed a ray of light or comfort for several days, now poured down such a flood of light upon the uncovered head of the president that the whole scene was illumined and transfigured by it. The effect was wonderful. Everybody was surprised and asstonished. The transition from gloomy darkness to the clearest and most brilliant sunlight was so sudden and so beneficent."

She also mentions, what was widely commented upon at the time, the appearance of a star a little after 2 p. m. upon this day of the inauguration. The heavens had been so very dark that a rift in the clouds permitted the star to be visible and brilliant. Taken with the sunburst at the beginning of the inaugural, the auguries were felt to be most propitious.

The aunt returned to her work. Her letters tell of daily carnage, and of 5,000 wounded men at one time in the field hospitals, among whom she sought out those from Maine, who were especially her charge, but no suffering soldier from any state passed the canvas-roofed Maine home unaided.

ASSASSINATION BLOW TO WORLD

Then, just as the welcome hope of peace was ripening into assurance, came the awful tragedy of Apr. 14, 1865, which stunned the country and startled the whole world into common human sympathy.

I was on my way to town, a mile distant, when I met a villager, one of those men who, like birds of ill favor, are ever the alert messengers of bad tidings, hastening to tell my father that Lincoln had been assassinated. He stopped to tell me his errand and I regarded him forever after, unjustly perhaps, with an aversion that in some occult way helf him responsible for the horror of his announcement.

I was too young to formulate an opinion. My first thought was that the South was chargeable with this new and terrible responsibility and that only more blood could atone for a deed so atrocious.

When I reached the village, men, women and children were alike over-whelmed. Gloom was everywhere, and wrath and despair struggled in the breasts of the strongest.

Why of all men should Abraham Lincoln, gentle of spirit, humane amd noble in act as in word, be the object of a deed so foul, so dastardly? Amid the tremendous excitement no one could answer. "Thy will be done," was whispered as often in deep despair as it was spoken in faith and consolation. Thus it was at home.

LETTERS TELL OF SORROW AT THE FRONT

(?) my aung wrote home:

"Isn't this news of the death of the president terrible? I am overwhelmed by it. I have felt depressed for the last two or three weeks, notwithstanding our victories. I have not hurrahed once or felt like it. When everybody was wild here, I remained indoors writing for one of my patients. I was disappointed that I could get up no enthusiasm, and attributed it to the presence of so much suffering. But I think now it was perhaps a presentiment of our great loss.

"The soldiers are revengeful. They want every rebel hung. It has been a common remark among our soldiers that Lincoln was a second Washington. He is enshrined in all our hearts.

"Only a week ago today he went through all the wards here, shaking hands with every soldier. In one of the tents he shook hands with a rebel. One of our men told him--'That man's a Johnny!' 'Is he?' and he went back and shook hands with him again, and told him he hoped he would be well taken care of and very soon returned to his family and home."

This is the heartfelt expression of the moment. In a later letter she gives her feelings somewhat fuller and more mature expression, and says:

"I was alone in my work with a house full of company, no help and very sick patients in the wards, but I bore up well under it until the news came of the assassination of our beloved president.

"I could not believe it, at first, but when the terrible truth was forced upon me I was almost paralyzed. It seemed as if the sun would never shine again. All in the future shrouded in impenetrable sorrow.

"I has no fear for our country. I knew that Mr. Lincoln's work was accomplished and that the rebellion, gigantic as its proportions were, was crushed. That the day of universal freedom had dawned upon the world; a day for heartfelt gratitude and national rejoicing such as no people had ever seen.

"But how could a nation rejoice when its best beloved lay dead? It was not that we needed him that we were so stricken with sorrow, but because we loved him. He was a wonderful man, great, wise and good, and with all the tenderness of a woman. How blest have we been under his firm rule and how blessed will be his memory!"