their respective pursuits, if they can be said to have chosen them, not because those pursuits promised the most money, fame, or happiness, but unconsciously, because they could not help it; and they succeeded, not because they resolved with an intense, continuous act of volition to do such and such things, but because they were impelled by a great, prevailing, paramount desire, which engulfed all lesser desires, to do them. No doubt there is a will that makes the man; but if it is not inborn, it cannot be put into him, and it needs no prompting. To tell a young man that he can become a millionaire, a railroad king, etc., etc., "*if* he will put into his work the same amount of brains and zeal" as A or B did before *he* became a millionaire or railroad king, is the veriest drivel. It is equivalent to saying that he will become a Samson if he will only put forth a Samson's strength, or that if an astronomical student will put into his work the mental energy, the spiritual force, of Newton, he will do as great things as Newton—which is not a very stimulating statement, if it be true. How strangely men persist in regarding moral qualities as habits merely, and not gifts! The will is a natural endowment as well as the mental faculties, and to want it is as bad as to want mental power.

WILLIAM MATHEWS.

IV.

THE SLAYER OF J. WILKES BOOTH.

THE WRITER had a personal acquaintance with Boston Corbett, who avenged the death of President Lincoln in so tragic a manner on the night of April 26, 1865.

During the year 1875, while attending a Soldiers' Reunion of Blue and Gray, at Caldwell, Ohio, I first met Mr. Corbett. The town was small and an immense crowd had gathered, General Sherman, among others, being present. Corbett and I were assigned to the same room for the night. I found him a nervous, excitable man, always the centre of attraction, with a keen, but wild, look in his eyes, and an interminable restlessness of body and limb. He was then a preacher, regularly ordained, I think. He led a prayer-meeting in the village church while there. He was always well armed, in self-defence, as he explained, and his experience while at Caldwell showed that he had some reason to fear violence. He got into an exciting argument with several men one afternoon over the question as to whether Booth had really been killed at all. Hot words ensued, a rush was made towards Corbett, and in an instant the gleaming barrel of his revolver flashed in the faces of his opponents. It was with considerable difficulty that they were separated and peace restored.

Corbett claimed to those of us whom he considered his friends that he had been hounded for years by men who were high in authority at Washington at the time of the assassination, and that they caused him to lose several important positions after he went into civil life, and had refused to shake hands with him or to answer his salutation on the streets. The only reason he assigned for this was that his bullet had deprived the Washington authorities of an opportunity to make a grand display in the execution of Booth.

Be this as it may, it is certain that Corbett was always on the watch for bodily harm from some source. During the night I shared a bed with him this was exemplified. It was a close, hot night. We slept on the ground floor, with the window raised. Corbett walked the floor for ten minutes after I was in bed. He would frequently clasp his hands and exclaim: "The Lord have mercy on my soul!" At last he knelt down and offered a fervent prayer, after which he placed a large revolver under his pillow and went to bed. He then told me the whole history of that dark night in Virginia. He said no words could express the resigned hatred, and yet heroic look, of Booth's face as it was lighted up by the flames of the tobacco barn, in which he had taken refuge from his pursuers. To the call for surrender, Booth hurled back words of scorn and defiance, and turned his back on the troops in derision. Corbett said he could stand it no longer, and, although the orders were to take Booth alive, if possible, he raised his revolver and fired. The wound in Booth's head was said to have been within half an inch of the location of Lincoln's fatal wound.

Corbett went to sleep, and I followed later on, with a restless, troubled sleep, in which I dreamed of something which made me awaken Corbett. He sat up in bed, drew out his pistol, and covered me with it. I assured him it was all a dream, and he calmed down again. For several years afterwards I received occasional letters from Mr. Corbett, and he finally drifted to Kansas, where, through the aid of some friends, he was appointed doorkeeper of the House of Representatives during the winter of 1887. While there his mind became seriously affected, and he suddenly appeared in the House one morning with a revolver in each hand, and attempted to kill the Speaker and others. He was promptly removed to the insane asylum.

Early in the year 1887, and while he was in the State House at Topeka, I sent a note to Corbett, asking him to write me an account of the capture and death of Booth, which he did. A copy of his reply is given herewith. I have every reason to think Mr. Corbett's memory was in fair condition when he wrote the article, and it may safely be accepted as a correct narration of the incidents of a dark hour in the nation's history.

R. B. HOOVER.

In camp, at Vienna, Virginia, on the morning of April 15, 1865, the news reached us that President Lincoln had been shot the night before; later news said he was alive, but there was no hope of his recovery. Our regiment (the 6th New York Cavalry) was immediately ordered out in pursuit of the assassin. Deployed as skirmishers, we advanced down to the Potomac River. When near the river, we saw the flag at half-mast on one of the forts, and we knew our President was dead. We returned to camp unsuccessful, but were soon afterward sent to Washington, to go in any direction required to scout for Booth.

Our regiment was soon cut up into detachments, all engaged in the same work, under different leaders, Colonel N. B. Switzer commanding the main body of the men; Major Bosworth, another portion of our command; another party under command of First Lieutenant Ed. P. Doherty, with twenty-six enlisted men, also accompanied by two detectives, to aid in the capture. They had photographs of Booth, Herold, and Surratt.

At the Sixth-Street wharf, we took the steam-tug John S Ide, under Captain Henry Wilson, who conveyed us to Belle Plain, where we landed and at once began the search between the two rivers, Potomac and Rappahannock. At Port Conway the ferryman recognized two of the pictures and said: "These two men crossed my ferry yesterday. Willie, J. H., a confederate officer," he said, "aided them on their way, giving Booth a lift on his horse after crossing the river." We followed the clew given, captured J. H., who was compelled to guide us to the place where he had left the men. Arriving at Garrett's farm, the Lieutenant said to me: "Booth is in that house; ride through the command, and see that every man's pistol is in readiness for use." I did so, and supplied two of our men with caps for their revolvers, who were out of caps.

On entering the premises, we found the men were no longer in the house, but had taken refuge in the barn. A surrender was demanded and refused, Booth declaring that he would not be taken alive. After much parleying Herold concluded to surrender, and was at once put under guard. The tobacco barn was then fired by Conger (the detective), and Booth could then be seen. A single shot from a Colt's revolver brought him down, and the capture was effected. A doctor was sent for, who pronounced the wound fatal. Inside of three hours he was dead. Mr. Conger chose me as an escort, and we started for Belle Plain, and he there took steamer for Washington, and before evening closed the news had flashed over the wires that Booth was taken.

April 26, 1865, was the day when God avenged Abraham Lincoln's death.

Our captive was deposited on the monitor Montauk, at the Navy-Yard at Washington.

During the interval of our different scouts, I attended prayer-meeting one night at Wesley Chapel. The leader said: "Brother Corbett, lead us in prayer." I prayed:

"O Lord, lay not innocent blood to our charge; but bring the guilty speedily to punishment." Afterward, when the assassin lay at my feet, a wounded man, and I saw the bullet had taken effect about an inch back of the ear, and I remembered that Mr. Lincoln was wounded about that part of the head, I said: "What a God we serve! I little thought, when I offered that prayer a week ago, that it would be answered in this way."

BOSTON CORBETT,
Late Serg't Co. L, 16th N. Y. Cavalry.

Written at Topeka, Kansas, January 19, 1887.

V.

AN EMERGENCY THAT DEMANDS A WORD.

I FIND MYSELF in hearty accord with the writer who recently suggested in THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW that there should be an American Academy of Language established for the purpose of determining that the growth of the English language in America shall proceed along scientific lines and with a scientific basis. The language is bound to grow. As

"New occasions teach new duties,"

so new objects, new ideas, new inventions, demand new words. Shall these things be left to whim, or chance, or the happy-go-lucky choosing of an inventor who has no true conception of the way in which words ought to be formed or selected? It would seem that there are enough monstrosities in the language already, and that the time has come for more rational action in the future. The establishing of an Academy of Language, in which all the colleges and higher educational institutions, and all the learned societies, should have representatives, would undoubtedly be a wise and conservative movement. Its authority would speedily vindicate itself. In all probability the newspapers, which are mainly instrumental in giving currency to words, would gladly accept the decisions of this tribunal and consent to employ in their columns no words that had not received the stamp of official approval.

I am led to these reflections by the necessity which has arisen for some word to express the process by which a convict will be killed when he is executed by the new law in New York State, which provides for the use of electricity as a substitute for the hangman's noose. The word "execution," by a process of restriction which is common in language, has come to mean simply hanging. Strictly speaking, of course, it is the law which is executed, not the man, and there are some purists who still insist that this is the only proper use of the word. So under the new method we shall still speak of execution when the murderer is—*what?* That is the question. Here, if the Academy of Language were in existence, would be a splendid opportunity for it to rise to the occasion and meet this—not long-felt, but—pressing want. Various "words" have been invented by various newspaper writers to fit the present case, but none of them seems to "fill the bill" exactly. Of all the suggestions, the palm for barbarism that is absolutely soul-harrowing must be assigned to "electrocution," with its companions in misery, "electrocute" and "electrocuted." May some good angel intervene and save the English-American language from such a blight! This emergency ought to arouse our people generally to the need that undeniably exists for some unquestioned authority which might be looked to in cases of this sort for a decision at once wise, rational, and common-sensible. Whether the proposed method of "execution" is a success or not, there will be not a little gained if the want of a word to designate the operation should lead to the establishment of such an institution as the writer referred to in my opening sentence would like to see established. At all events, I am very glad to second his motion with great heartiness, and with a profound and growing conviction that the need of prudent and sagacious direction of the growth and development of a language is imperative.

KINGDON MEREDITH.