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THE

ASSASSINATION

AND

DEATH:

OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

At Washington, on the 14th of April, 1865.

BY ABOtt A. ABOtt,

AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

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THE
ASSASSINATION AND DEATH
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

ON the morning of Saturday, April 15th, 1865, the country was thrown into the utmost consternation by the reception of the following dispatch from Secretary Stanton, announcing the ASSASSINATION of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States. Simultaneously with its reception in New York, it was sent all over the country by electric telegraph:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, April 15—1:30 A. M. }

Major-General Dix, New York:—

This evening, at about 9:30 P. M., at Ford's Theatre, the President, while sitting in his private box with Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Harris, and Major Rathbun, was shot by an assassin, who suddenly entered the box and approached behind the President.

The assassin then leaped upon the stage, brandishing a large dagger or knife, and made his escape in the rear of the theatre.

The pistol-ball entered the back of the President's head, and penetrated nearly through the head: The wound is mortal.

The President has been insensible ever since it was inflicted, and is now dying.

About the same hour an assassin, whether the same or not, entered Mr. Seward's apartments, and, under pretence of having a prescription, was shown to the Secretary's sick-chamber. The assassin immediately rushed to the bed and inflicted two or three stabs on the throat and two on the face.

It is hoped the wounds may not be mortal. My apprehension is that they will prove fatal.

The nurse alarmed Mr. Frederick Seward, who was in an adjoining room, and he hastened to the door of his father's room, when he met the assassin, who inflicted upon him one or more dangerous wounds. The recovery of Frederick Seward is doubtful.

It is not probable that the President will live through the night.

General Grant and wife were advertised to be at the theatre this evening, but he started to Burlington at six o'clock this afternoon.

At the Cabinet meeting, at which General Grant was present, the subject of the state of the country and the prospect of a speedy peace were discussed. The President was very cheerful and hopeful, and spoke very kindly of General Lee and others of the confederacy, and of the establishment of government in Virginia.

All the members of the Cabinet except Mr. Seward are now in attendance upon the President.

I have seen Mr. Seward, but he and Frederick were both unconscious.

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Following this startling and deplorable intelligence were the following particulars, which were telegraphed to the New York press :

WASHINGTON, April 14, 1865.

Assassination has been inaugurated in Washington. The bowie-knife and pistol have been applied to President Lincoln and Secretary Seward. The former was shot in the throat, while at Ford's Theatre to-night. Mr. Seward was badly cut about the neck, while in his bed at his residence.

WASHINGTON, April 14, 1865.

Washington was thrown into an intense excitement a few minutes before eleven o'clock this evening, by the announcement that the President and Secretary Seward had been assassinated and were dead.

The wildest excitement prevailed in all parts of the city. Men, women, and children, old and young, rushed to and fro, and the rumors were magnified until we had nearly every member of the

Cabinet killed. Some time elapsed before authentic data could be ascertained in regard to the affair.

About half past ten o'clock this evening a tall, well-dressed man made his appearance at Secretary Seward's residence, and applied for admission. He was refused admission by the servant, when the desperado stated that he had a prescription from the Surgeon General, and that he was ordered to deliver it in person. He was still refused, except upon the written order of the physician. This he pretended to show, and pushed by the servant and rushed up stairs to Mr. Seward's room. He was met at the door by Mr. Frederick Seward, who notified him that he was master of the house, and would take charge of the medicine. After a few words had passed between them he dodged by Fred. Seward and rushed to the Secretary's bed, and struck him in the neck with a dagger, and also in the breast.

It was supposed at first that Mr. Seward was killed instantly, but it was found afterwards that the wound was not mortal.

Major Wm. H. Seward, Jr., paymaster, was in the room, and rushed to the defence of his father, and was badly cut in the *melee* with the assassin, but not fatally.

The desperado managed to escape from the house, and was prepared for escape by having a horse at the door. He immediately mounted his horse and sung out the motto of the State of Virginia, "*Sic Semper Tyrannis!*" and rode off.

Surgeon General Barnes was immediately sent for, and he examined Mr. Seward and pronounced him safe. His wounds were not fatal. The jugular vein was not cut, nor the wound in the breast deep enough to be fatal.

The President and Mrs. Lincoln were at Ford's theatre, listening to the performance of the AMERICAN COUSIN, occupying a box in the second tier. At the close of the third act a person entered the box occupied by the President, and shot Mr. Lincoln in the head. The shot entered his head, and came out above the temple.

The assassin then jumped from the box upon the stage, and ran across to the other side, exhibiting a dagger in his hand, flourishing it in a tragical manner, shouting the same words repeated by the desperado at Mr. Seward's house, adding to it, "The South is avenged," and then escaped from the back entrance to the stage, but in his passage dropped his pistol and his hat.

Mr. Lincoln fell forward from his seat, and Mrs. Lincoln fainted.

The moment the astonished audience could realize what had

happened, the President was taken and carried to Mr. Petersen's house, in Tenth street, opposite to the theatre. Medical aid was immediately sent for, and it was at first supposed to be fatal, and it was announced that he could not live; but at half past twelve he is still alive, though in a precarious condition.

As the assassin ran across the stage, Colonel J. B. Stewart, of this city, who was occupying one of the front seats in the orchestra, on the same side of the house as the box occupied by Mr. Lincoln, sprang to the stage and followed him; but he was obstructed in his passage across the stage by the fright of the actors, and reached the back door about three seconds after the assassin had passed out. Colonel Stewart got to the street just in time to see him mount his horse and ride away.

This operation shows that the whole thing was a preconcerted plan. The person who fired the pistol was a man about thirty years of age, about five feet nine, spare built, fair skin, dark hair, apparently bushy, with a large mustache. Laura Keene and the leader of the orchestra declare that they recognized him as J. Wilkes Booth, the actor, and a rabid secessionist. Who ever he was, it is plainly evident that he thoroughly understood the theatre and all the approaches and modes of escape to the stage. A person not familiar with the theatre could not have possibly made his escape so well and quickly.

The alarm was sounded in every quarter. Mr. Stanton was notified, and immediately left his house.

All the other members of the Cabinet escaped attack.

Cavalrymen were sent out in all directions, and dispatches sent to all the fortifications, and it is thought he will be captured.

WASHINGTON, April 15—1 A. M.

The streets in the vicinity of Ford's Theatre are densely crowded by an anxious and excited throng. A guard has been placed across Tenth street and F and E streets, and only official persons and particular friends of the President are allowed to pass.

The popular heart is deeply stirred, and the deepest indignation against leading rebels is freely expressed.

The scene at the house where the President lies *in extremis* is very affecting. Even Secretary Stanton is affected to tears.

When the news spread through the city that the President had been shot, the people, with pale faces and compressed lips, crowded every place where there was the slightest chance of obtaining information in regard to the affair.

After the President was shot, Lieutenant Rathbun, caught the assassin by the arm, who immediately struck him with a knife, and jumped from the box, as before stated.

Vice-President Johnson arrived at the White House, where the President lies, about one o'clock, and will remain with him to the last.

The President's family are in attendance upon him also.

As soon as intelligence could be got to the War Department, the electric telegraph and the signal corps, were put in requisition to endeavor to prevent the escape of the assassins, and all the troops around Washington are under arms.

The latest advices from Secretary Seward reveal more desperate work there than at first supposed. Seward's wounds are not in themselves fatal; but, in connection with his recent injuries, and the great loss of blood he has sustained, his recovery is questionable.

It was Clarence A. Seward, instead of Wm. H. Seward, Jr., who was wounded. Fred. Seward was also badly cut, as were also three nurses, who were in attendance upon the Secretary, showing that a desperate struggle took place there. The wounds of the whole party were dressed.

ONE O'CLOCK, A. M.

The President is perfectly senseless, and there is not the slightest hope of his surviving. Physicians believe that he will die before morning. All of his Cabinet, except Secretary Seward, are with him. Speaker Colfax, Senator Farwell, of Maine, and other gentlemen, are also at the house awaiting the termination.

The scene at the President's bedside is described by one who witnessed it as most affecting. It was surrounded by his Cabinet ministers, all of whom were bathed in tears, not even excepting Mr. Stanton, who, when informed by Surgeon-General Barnes that the President could not live until morning, exclaimed, "Oh, no, General; no—no;" and with an impulse, natural as it was unaffected, immediately sat down on a chair near his bedside and wept like a child.

Senator Sumner was seated on the right of the President's couch, near the head, holding the right hand of the President in his own. He was sobbing like a woman, with his head bowed down almost on the pillow of the bed on which the President was lying.

WASHINGTON, April 15—1 : 30 A. M.

President Lincoln and wife, with other friends, this evening visited Ford's theatre, for the purpose of witnessing the performance of the American Cousin.

It was announced in the papers that General Grant would also be present; but that gentleman took the late train of cars for New Jersey.

The theatre was densely crowded, and all seemed delighted with the scene before them. During the third act, and while there was a temporary pause for one of the actors to enter, a sharp report of a pistol was heard, which merely attracted attention, but suggested nothing serious, until a man rushed to the front of the President's box, waving a long dagger in his right hand, and exclaiming, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" and immediately leaped from the box, which was in the second tier, to the stage beneath, and ran across to the opposite side, making his escape, amid the bewilderment of the audience, from the rear of the theatre, and, mounting a horse, fled.

The screams of Mrs. Lincoln first disclosed the fact to the audience that the President had been shot, when all present rose to their feet, rushing towards the stage, many exclaiming, "Hang him! Hang him!"

The excitement was of the wildest possible description, and of course there was an abrupt termination of the theatrical performance.

There was a rush toward the President's box, when cries were heard:—"Stand back and give him air." "Has any one stimulants?"

On a hasty examination it was found that the President had been shot through the head, above and back of the temporal bone, and that some of the brain was oozing out.

He was removed to a private house opposite to the theatre, and the Surgeon-General of the army and other surgeons sent for to attend to his condition.

On an examination of the private box, blood was discovered on the back of the cushioned rocking chair on which the President had been sitting, also on the partition and on the floor. A common single-barreled pocket-pistol was found on the carpet.

The President was in a state of syncope, totally insensible, and breathing slowly. The blood oozed from the wound at the back of his head.

The surgeons exhausted every possible effort of medical

skill; but all hope was gone. The parting of his family with the dying President is too sad for description.

The President and Mrs. Lincoln did not start for the theatre until fifteen minutes after eight o'clock. Speaker Colfax was at the White House at the time, and the President stated to him that he was going. Mrs. Lincoln had not been well. The papers had announced that General Grant and they were to be present, and, as General Grant had gone North, he did not wish the audience to be disappointed.

He went with apparent reluctance, and urged Mr. Colfax to go with him; but that gentleman had made other engagements, and, with Mr. Ashmun, of Massachusetts, bid him good-by.

When the excitement at the theatre was at its wildest height, reports were circulated that Secretary Seward had also been assassinated.

On reaching this gentleman's residence, a crowd and a military guard were found at the door, and on entering, it was ascertained that the reports were based on truth.

Everybody there was so excited that scarcely an intelligible word could be gathered. But the facts are substantially as follows:

About ten o'clock a man rang the bell, and the call having been answered by a colored servant, he said he had come from Dr. Verdi, Secretary Seward's family physician, with a prescription, at the same time holding in his hand a small piece of folded paper, and saying, in answer to a refusal, that he must see the Secretary; as he was intrusted with particular directions concerning the medicine.

He still insisted on going up, although repeatedly informed that no one could enter the chamber. The man pushed the servant aside, and walked hastily towards the Secretary's room, and was then met by Mr. Frederic Seward, of whom he demanded to see the Secretary, making the same representation which he did to the servant.

What further passed in the way of colloquy is not known; but the man struck him on the head with a billy, severely injuring the skull and felling him almost senseless.

The assassin then rushed into the chamber and attacked Major Seward, Paymaster United States Army, and Mr. Haussell, a messenger of the State Department, and two male nurses, disabling them all.

He then rushed upon the Secretary, who was lying in bed in

the same room, and inflicted three stabs in the neck, but severing, it is thought and hoped, no arteries, though he bled profusely.

The assassin then rushed down stairs, mounted his horse at the door, and made off before an alarm could be sounded, and in the same manner as the assassin of the President.

It is believed that the injuries of the Secretary are not fatal; nor those of either of the others, although both the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary are very seriously injured.

Secretaries Stanton and Welles, and other prominent officers of the Government, called at Secretary Seward's house to inquire into his condition, and there heard of the assassination of the President.

They then proceeded to the house where he was lying, exhibiting of course intense anxiety and solicitude.

An immense crowd was gathered in front of the President's house, and a strong guard was also stationed there; many persons evidently supposing he would be brought to his home.

The entire city to-night presents a scene of wild excitement, accompanied by the profoundest sorrow; many shed tears.

The military authorities have despatched mounted patrols in every direction, in order, if possible, to arrest the assassins. The whole metropolitan police are likewise vigilant for the same purpose.

The attacks, both at the theatre and at Secretary Seward's house, took place at about the same hour—ten o'clock—thus showing a preconcerted plan to assassinate those gentlemen. Some evidences of the guilt of the party who attacked the President are in the possession of the police.

Vice-President Johnson is in the city, and his headquarters are guarded by troops.

WASHINGTON, April 15, 1865.

When the fatal shot was fired, Mrs. Lincoln, who was alongside of her husband, exclaimed, "Oh! why didn't they shoot me—why didn't they shoot me?"

There is evidence that Secretary Stanton was also marked for assassination. On receipt of intelligence at the War Department of the attack on the President, two employees of the department were sent to summon the Secretary. Just as they approached his house, a man jumped out from behind a tree-box in front of the house and ran away. It is well known to be the custom of the Secretary to go from the department to his house between nine and twelve, P. M., and usually unattended. It is

supposed that the assassin intended to shoot him as he entered the house, but failed from the fact that Mr. Stanton remained at home during the evening.

The horse of the man who made the attack on Secretary Seward has been found near the Lincoln Hospital, bathed in sweet, and with blood upon the saddle cloths.

THE LATEST NEWS.

Secretary Stanton to General Dix.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, April 15—3 A. M. }

Major-General Dix, New York:—

The President still breathes, but is quite insensible, as he has been ever since he was shot. He evidently did not see the person who shot him, but was looking on the stage as he was approached from behind.

Mr. Seward has rallied, and it is hoped he may live.

Frederick Seward's condition is very critical.

The attendant who was present was shot through the lungs, and is not expected to live.

The wounds of Major Seward are not serious.

Investigation strongly indicates J. Wilkes Booth as the assassin of the President. Whether it was the same or a different person that attempted to murder Mr. Seward remains in doubt.

The Chief Justice is engaged in taking the evidence.

Every exertion has been made to prevent the escape of the murderer. His horse has been found on the road near Washington.

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

THE END.

WASHINGTON, April 15—9:30 A. M.

THE PRESIDENT DIED THIS MORNING AT TWENTY-TWO MINUTES PAST SEVEN. MR. SEWARD IS ALSO DEAD.

As soon as the news was published in the New York papers it spread like wildfire, and before breakfast-time the entire city and its environs were fully acquainted with it. Newspapers were impossible to be obtained after eight o'clock at any price. The deepest grief was portrayed on every countenance. Men who yesterday openly expressed themselves opposed to Mr. Lincoln's political course, to-day were as sincerely depressed by the deplorable intelligence as were his most ardent supporters. The popular feeling is one of most unmitigated sorrow. Mr. Lincoln, by a firm and consistent course, had won multitudes of friends even among those who differed from him on questions of public import. His death at such a time is a calamity which cannot be overrated in importance. The city is hung in mourning. All business is suspended.

The great rebellion just drawing to a close may from this unhappy event derive renewed encouragement, and the land may again witness the scenes of blood and destruction which have become but too familiar to it during the past four years. And to be cut off at such a moment! He was at a theatre, interested and amused by the performance, with his family about him, and apparently in the most complete security. Death at such a moment is indeed an awful thing.

"Murder most foul, as in the best it is;!
 But this, most foul, strange, and unnatural.
 * * * * *
 Thus was I * * * * * at once despatched,
 Cut off even in the blossom of my life,
 Unhousel'd, unprepared, without unction;
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections on my head:
 O, horrible! O, horrible! Most horrible!"

Shakspeare.

The assassination of President Lincoln has no parallel in history. Caesar's crown was won amid the secret enmities of desperate and ambitious opponents; and the dagger of Brutus was a sign of hope not only to a political clique but to a whole people. Marat was a vulgar and bloodthirsty miscreant, and the poignard of Charlotte Corday found its way to the heart of one for whom no tears were shed, but those of a handful of hated villains as guilty as Marat was himself. But Mr. Lincoln was neither a tyrant nor a Red Republican. His public acts were all strongly in consonance with the wishes of a large majority of the entire people. He himself proclaimed, while a Member of Congress, in 1847, the most complete justification of popular revolution which has ever emanated from any public man. It accords with the theory of the rights of the majority, and it accords with the theory of the rights of the minority. It teaches us the great lesson that redress for popular wrongs, either real or fancied, must be sought not by the sword, for "he who takes up the sword shall fall by the sword," but by peaceful measures, by argument, by converting public opinion, if it can be converted, by persuasion, and by reason. Said Mr. Lincoln :

“ Any people, anywhere, being inclined, AND HAVING THE POWER, have a right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right—a right which, as we hope and believe, is to liberate the world. Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing government may choose to exercise it. *Any portion of such people*, that CAN, may revolutionize, and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit. More than this, a *majority* of any portion of such people may revolutionize, putting down a *minority*, intermingled with or near about them, who may oppose their movements.”

What more can be said? Evidently, nothing. The whole theory of Revolution is here dwelt with frankly, and disposed of completely.

Mr. Lincoln was therefore not only not a tyrant as his enemies charge him to have been, but was a champion of Revolution. But he proclaimed the great truth that Revolutions to be successful must appeal to Reason and not to Force.

If the South had had right on its side, there never would have been a war. Had it been sincere in its desire for independance, it would have commenced its career as a separate Confederacy by abjuring slavery, and throwing itself upon the sense of justice of the Northern people would have asked for recognition on the grounds of the Rights of the Minority. But this it did not. It proclaimed slavery to be its corner-stone, and slavery has become or will yet become its tomb-stone!

But let the sad event which these pages commemorate, serve also to remind the people that it was committed not by a community but by an individual, nor does that individual appear to have been the instrument of any party. But whether he was or not, the fact is plain that but few persons could have been privy to his fell intention. We are convinced that Mr. Lincoln's most bitter opponents would have shrunk with horror from the continuance of such a crime. Assassination is a strange word to American ears.

In executing vengeance upon the author of this great crime let us therefore not commit the mistake, nay the crime, a crime equally as great as the original one which may provoke it, the crime of seeking vengeance upon either the lives or the liberty or even the fair repute of the innocent. There are millions of persons in our unhappy country to-day, who were not favorable to Mr. Lincoln's political course. Whatever we may think of their opinions, let us beware of confusing political inimicality with personal hatred.