

THE JUDICIAL
MURDER OF
MARY E. SURRATT

by
David Miller DeWitt

THE CONFEDERATE
REPRINT COMPANY



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Originally Published in 1895
by John Murphy and Company
Baltimore, Maryland

Reprint Edition © 2014
The Confederate Reprint Company
Post Office Box 2027
Toccoa, Georgia 30577
www.confederatereprint.com

Cover and Interior Design by
Magnolia Graphic Design
www.magnoliagraphicdesign.com

ISBN-13: 978-0692293737
ISBN-10: 0692293736

Oceans of horse-hair, continents of parchment, and learned-sergeant eloquence, were it continued till the learned tongue wore itself small in the indefatigable learned mouth, cannot make the unjust just. The grand question still remains, Was the judgment just? If unjust, it will not and cannot get harbour for itself, or continue to have footing in this Universe, which was made by other than One Unjust. Enforce it by never such statuting, three readings, royal assents; blow it to the four winds with all manner of quilted trumpeters and pursuivants, in the rear of them never so many gibbets and hangmen, it will not stand, it cannot stand. From all souls of men, from all ends of Nature, from the Throne of God above, there are voices bidding it: Away! Away!

Past and Present

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PRELIMINARY

CHAPTER ONE

The Reign of Terror



The assassination of Abraham Lincoln burst upon the City of Washington like a black thunder-bolt out of a cloudless sky. On Monday, the 3d of April, 1865, Richmond was taken. On the succeeding Sunday (the ninth), General Lee with the main Army of the South surrendered. The Rebellion of nearly one-half the nation lay in its death-throes. The desperate struggle for the unity of the Republic was ending in a perfect triumph; and the loyal people gave full rein to their joy. Every night the streets of the city were illuminated. The chief officers of the government, one after another, were serenaded. On the evening of Tuesday, the eleventh, the President addressed his congratulations to an enthusiastic multitude from a window of the White House. On the night of Thursday (the thirteenth), Edwin M. Stanton, the Secretary of War, and Ulysses S. Grant, the victorious General of the Army of the North, were tumultuously greeted with banners and music and cannon at the residence of the Secretary. The next day, Friday the 14th, was the fourth anniversary of the surrender of Fort Sumter to the South, and that national humiliation was to be avenged by the restoration of the flag of the United States to its proper place above the fort by the hand of the same gallant officer who had been compelled to pull it down. In the evening, a torch-light pro-

cession perambulated the streets of the Federal Capital. Enthusiastic throngs filled the theatres, where the presence of great officials had been advertised by huge placards, and whose walls were everywhere festooned with the American flag. After four years of agonizing but unabating strain, all patriots felt justified in yielding to the full enjoyment of the glorious relaxation.

Suddenly, at its very zenith, the snap of a pistol dislimns and scatters this great jubilee, as though it were, indeed, the insubstantial fabric of a vision. At half past ten that night, from the box of the theatre where the President is seated, a shot is heard; a wild figure, hatless and clutching a gleaming knife, emerges through the smoke; it leaps from the box to the stage, falls upon one knee, recovers itself, utters one shout and waves aloft its bloody weapon; then turns, limps across in front of the audience and disappears like a phantom behind the scenes. Simultaneously, there breaks upon the startled air the shriek of a woman, followed close by confused cries of "Water! Water!" and "The President is shot!"

For the first few moments both audience and actors are paralyzed. One man alone jumps from the auditorium to the stage and pursues the flying apparition. But, as soon as the hopeless condition of the President and the escape of the assassin begin to transpire, angry murmurs of "Burn the Theatre!" are heard in the house, and soon swell into a roar in the street where a huge crowd has already assembled.

The intermingling throng surges into the building from every quarter, and mounts guard at every exit. Not one of the company of actors is allowed to go out. The people seem to pause for a moment, as if awaiting from Heaven a retribution as sudden and awful as the crime.

All their joy is turned to grief in the twinkling of an eye. The Rebellion they had too easily believed to be dead could still strike, it seemed, a fatal blow against the very life of the Republic. A panic seizes the multitude in and around the theatre, and from the theatre spreads, "like the Night," over the whole city. And when the frightened citizens hear, as they immediately do, the story of the bloody massacre in the house of the Secretary of State,

occurring at the same hour with the murder of the President, the panic swells into a reign of terror. The wildest stories find the quickest and most eager credence. Every member of the Cabinet and the General of the Army have been, or are about to be, killed; the government itself is at a standstill; and the lately discomfited rebels are soon to be in possession of the Capital. Patriotic people, delivering themselves over to a fear of they know not what, cry hoarsely for vengeance on they know not whom. The citizen upon whose past loyalty the slightest suspicion can be cast cowers for safety close to his hearth-stone. The terror-stricken multitude want but a leader cool and unscrupulous enough, to plunge into a promiscuous slaughter, such as stained the new-born revolution in France. A leader, indeed, they soon find, but he is not a Danton. He is a leader only in the sense that he has caught the same madness of terror and suspicion which has seized the people, that he holds high place, and that he has the power and is in a fit humor to pander to the panic.

Edwin M. Stanton was forced by the tremendous crisis up to the very top of affairs. Vice-President Johnson, in the harrowing novelty of his position, was for the time being awed into passive docility. The Secretary of State was doubly disabled, if not killed. The General of the Army was absent. The Secretary of War without hesitation grasped the helm thus thrust into his hand, but, alas! he immediately lost his head. His exasperation at the irony of fate, which could so ruthlessly and in a moment wither the triumph of a great cause by so unexpected and overwhelming a calamity, was so profound and intense, his desire for immediate and commensurate vengeance was so uncontrollable and unreasoning, as to distort his perception, unsettle his judgment, and thus cause him to form an estimate of the nature and extent of the impending danger as false and exaggerated as that of the most panic-stricken wretch in the streets. Personally, besides, he was unfitted in many respects for such an emergency. Though an able and, it may be, a great War-Minister, he exerted no control over his temper; he habitually identified a conciliatory and charitable disposition with active disloyalty; and, being unpopular with the people of Wash-

ington by reason of the gruffness of his ways and the inconsistencies of his past political career, he had reached the unalterable conviction that the Capital was a nest of sympathizers with the South, and that he was surrounded by enemies of himself and his country.

When, therefore, upon the crushing news that the President was slain, followed hard the announcement that another assassin had made a slaughter-house of the residence of the Minister's own colleague, self-possession – the one supreme quality which was indispensable to a leader at such an awful juncture – forsook him and fled.

Before the breath was out of the body of the President, the Secretary had rushed to the conclusion, unsupported as yet by a shadow of testimony, that the acts of Booth and of the assailant of Seward (at the moment supposed to be John H. Surratt) were the outcome of a widespread, numerous and powerful conspiracy to kill, not only the President and the Secretary of State, but all the other heads of the Departments, the Vice-President and the General of the Army as well, and thus bring the government to an end; and that the primary moving power of the conspiracy was the defunct Rebellion as represented by its titular President and his Cabinet, and its agents in Canada. This belief, embraced with so much precipitation, immediately became more than a belief; it became a fixed idea in his mind. He saw, heard, felt and cherished every thing that favored it. He would see nothing, would hear nothing, and hated everything, that in the slightest degree militated against it. Upon this theory he began, and upon this theory he prosecuted to the end, every effort for the discovery, arrest, trial and punishment of the murderers.

He was seconded by a lieutenant well-fitted for such a purpose – General Lafayette C. Baker, Chief of the Detective Force. In one of the two minority reports presented to the House of Representatives by the Judiciary Committee, on the Impeachment Investigation of 1867, this man and his methods are thus delineated:

The first witness examined was General Lafayette C. Baker, late chief of the detective police, and although examined on oath, time and again, and on various occasions, it is doubtful whether he has in any one thing told the truth, even by accident. In every important statement he is contradicted by witnesses of unquestioned credibility. And there can be no doubt that to his many previous outrages, entitling him to an unenviable immortality, he has added that of wilful and deliberate perjury; and we are glad to know that no one member of the committee deems any statement made by him as worthy of the slightest credit. What a blush of shame will tinge the cheek of the American student in future ages, when he reads that this miserable wretch for years held, as it were, in the hollow of his hand, the liberties of the American people. That, clothed with power by a reckless administration, and with his hordes of unprincipled tools and spies permeating the land everywhere, with uncounted thousands of the people's money placed in his hands for his vile purposes, this creature not only had power to arrest without crime or writ, and imprison without limit, any citizen of the republic, but that he actually did so arrest thousands, all over the land, and filled the prisons of the country with the victims of his malice, or that of his masters.

In this man's hands Secretary Stanton placed all the resources of the War Department, in soldiers, detectives, material and money, and commanded him to push ahead and apprehend all persons suspected of complicity in the assumed conspiracy, and to conduct an investigation as to the origin and progress of the crime, upon the theory he had adopted and which, as much as any other, Baker was perfectly willing to accept and then, by his peculiar methods, establish. Forthwith was ushered in the grand carnival of detectives. Far and wide they sped. They had orders from Baker to do two things:

I. To arrest all the "Suspect." II. By promises, rewards, threats, deceit, force, or any other effectual means, to extort confessions and procure testimony to establish the conspiracy whose existence had been postulated.

At two o'clock in the morning of Saturday, the fifteenth, they burst into the house of Mrs. Surratt and displaying the bloody collar of the coat of the dying Lincoln, demanded the whereabouts of Booth and Surratt. It being presently discovered that Booth had escaped on horseback across the Navy Yard Bridge with David Herold ten minutes in his rear, a dash was made upon the livery-stables of Washington, their proprietors taken into custody, and then the whole of lower Maryland was invaded, the soldiers declaring martial law as they progressed. Ford's theatre was taken and held by an armed force, and the proprietor and employees were all swept into prison, including Edward Spangler, a scene-shifter, who had been a menial attendant of Booth's. The superstitious notion prevailed that the inanimate edifice whose walls had suffered such a desecration was in some vague sense an accomplice; the Secretary swore that no dramatic performance should ever take place there again; and the suspicion was sedulously kept alive that the manager and the whole force of the company must have aided their favorite actor, or the crime could not have been so easily perpetrated and the assassin escaped.

On the night of the fifteenth (Saturday) a locked room in the Kirkwood House, where Vice President Johnson was stopping, which had been engaged by George A. Atzerodt on the morning of the fourteenth, was broken open, and in the bed were found a bowie-knife and a revolver, and on the wall a coat (subsequently identified as Herold's), in which was found, among other articles, a bank book of Booth's. The room had not been otherwise occupied – Atzerodt, after taking possession of it, having mysteriously disappeared.

On the morning of the seventeenth (Monday), at Baltimore, Michael O'Laughlin was arrested as a friend of Booth's, and it was soon thought that he "*resembled extremely*" a certain suspicious stranger who, it was remembered, had been seen prowling about Secretary Stanton's residence on the night of the 13th, when the serenade took place, and there doing such an unusual act as inquiring for, and looking at, General Grant.

On the same day at Fort Monroe, Samuel Arnold was ar-

rested, whose letter signed "Sam" had been found on Saturday night among the effects of Booth.

On the night of the seventeenth, also, the house of Mrs. Surratt with all its contents was taken possession of by the soldiers, and Mrs. Surratt, her daughter, and all the other inmates were taken into custody. While the ladies were making preparations for their departure to prison, a man disguised as a laborer, with a sleeve of his knit undershirt drawn over his head, a pick-axe on his shoulder, and covered with mud, came to the door with the story that he was to dig a drain for Mrs. Surratt in the morning; and that lady asseverating that she had never seen the man before, he was swept with the rest to headquarters, and there, to the astonishment of everybody, turned out to be the desperate assailant of the Swards.

During these few days Washington was like a city of the dead. The streets were hung with crape. The obsequies, which started on its march across the continent the colossal funeral procession in which the whole people were mourners, were being celebrated with the most solemn pomp. No business was done except at Military Headquarters. Men hardly dared talk of the calamity of the nation. Everywhere soldiers and police were on the alert to seize any supposed or denounced sympathizer with the South. Mysterious and prophetic papers turned up at the White House and the War Department. Women whispered terrible stories of what they knew about the "Great Crime." To be able to give evidence was to be envied as a hero.

And still the arch-devil of the plot could not be found!

The lower parts of Maryland seethed like a boiling pot, and the prisons of Washington were choking with the "suspect" from that quarter. Lloyd – the drunken landlord of the tavern at Surrattsville, ten miles from Washington, at which Booth and Herold had stopped at midnight of the fatal Friday for carbines and whisky – after two days of stubborn denial was at last frightened into confession; and Doctor Mudd, who had set Booth's leg Saturday morning thirty miles from Washington, was in close confinement. All the intimate friends of the actor in Washington,

in Baltimore, in Philadelphia, in New York and even in Montreal were in the clutches of the government. Surratt himself – the pursuit of whom, guided by Weichman, his former college-chum, his room-mate, and the favorite guest of his mother, had been instant and thorough – it was ascertained, had left Canada on the 12th of April and was back again on the 18th.

But where was Booth? where Herold? where Atzerodt?

On the 20th, the Secretary of War applied the proper stimulus by issuing a proclamation to the following effect:

\$50,000 reward will be paid by this department for the apprehension of the murderer of our late beloved President.

\$25,000 reward for the apprehension of John H. Surratt, one of Booth's accomplices.

\$25,000 reward for the apprehension of Herold, another of Booth's accomplices.

Liberal rewards will be paid for any information that shall conduce to the arrest of either of the above-named criminals or their accomplices.

All persons harboring or secreting the said persons, or either of them, or aiding or assisting in their concealment or escape, will be treated as accomplices in the murder of the President and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State, and shall be subject to trial before a military commission and the punishment of death.

What is noteworthy about this document is that Stanton had already made up his mind as to the guilt of the persons named as accomplices of Booth; that he needed only their arrest, being assured of their consequent conviction; and that he had already determined that their trial and the trial of all persons connected with the great crime, however remotely, should be had before a military tribunal, and that the punishment to follow conviction should be death.

At four o'clock in the morning of the very day this proclamation was issued, Atzerodt was apprehended at the house of his cousin in Montgomery County, Maryland, about twenty-two miles

northward of Washington, by a detail of soldiers, to whom, by the way, notwithstanding the arrest preceded the proclamation, \$25,000 reward was subsequently paid. With Atzerodt his cousin, Richter, was taken also. O'Laughlin, Payne, Arnold, Atzerodt and Richter, as they were severally arrested, were put into the custody of the Navy Department and confined on board the Monitor *Saugus*, which on the morning of Saturday, when the President died, had been ordered to swing out into the middle of the river opposite the Navy Yard, prepared to receive at any hour, day or night, dead or alive, the arch-assassin. Each of these prisoners was loaded with double irons and kept under a strong guard. On the 23d, Atzerodt, by order of the Secretary of War, was transferred to the Monitor *Montauk*, to separate him from his cousin, and Payne, in addition to his double irons, had a ball and chain fastened to each ankle by the direction of the same officer. On the next day Spangler, who had hitherto been confined in the Old Capitol Prison, was transferred to one of the Monitors and presumably subjected to the same treatment. On the same day the following order was issued:

The Secretary of War requests that the prisoners on board iron-clads belonging to this department for better security against conversation shall have a canvass bag put over the head of each and tied around the neck, with a hole for proper breathing and eating, but not seeing, and that Payne be secured to prevent self-destruction.

All of which was accordingly done.

And still no Booth! It seems as though the Secretary were mad enough to imagine that he could wring from Providence the arrest of the principal assassin by heaping tortures on his supposed accomplices.

At length, in the afternoon of the 26th – Wednesday, the second week after the assassination – Col. Conger arrived with the news of the death of Booth and the capture of Herold on the early morning of that day; bringing with him the diary and other articles

found on the person of Booth, which were delivered to Secretary Stanton at his private residence. In the dead of the ensuing night, the body of Booth, sewed up in an old army blanket, arrived, attended by the dog-like Herold; and the living and the dead were immediately transferred to the *Montauk*. Herold was double ironed, balled and chained and hooded. The body of Booth was identified; an autopsy held; the shattered bone of his neck taken out for preservation as a relic (it now hangs from the ceiling of the Medical Museum into which Ford's Theatre was converted, or did before the collapse); and then, with the utmost secrecy and with all the mystery which could be fabricated, under the direction of Col. Baker, the corpse was hurriedly taken from the vessel into a small boat, rowed to the Arsenal grounds, and buried in a grave dug in a large cellar-like apartment on the ground floor of the Old Penitentiary; the door was locked, the key removed and delivered into the hands of Secretary Stanton. No effort was spared to conceal the time, place and circumstances of the burial. False stories were set afloat by Baker in furtherance of such purpose. Stanton seemed to fear an escape or rescue of the dead man's body; and vowed that no rebel or no rebel sympathizer should have a chance to glory over the corpse, or a fragment of the corpse, of the murderer of Lincoln.

CHAPTER TWO

The Bureau of Military (In)Justice



Mingling with the varied emotions evoked by the capture and death of the chief criminal was a feeling of deepest exasperation that the foul assassin should after all have eluded the ignominious penalty of his crime. Thence arose a savage disposition on the part of the governing powers to wreak this baffled vengeance first, on his inanimate body; secondly, on the lives of his associates held so securely in such close custody; and thirdly, on all those in high places who might be presumed to sympathize with his deeds. It was too horrible to imagine that the ghost of the martyred Lincoln should walk unavenged. So stupendous a calamity must of necessity be the outcome of as stupendous a conspiracy, and must in the very justice of things be followed by as stupendous a retribution. A sacrifice must be offered and the victims must be forthcoming. To employ the parallel subsequently drawn by General Ewing on the trial of the conspirators: On the funeral pyre of Patroclus must be immolated the twelve Trojan captives. They were sure of Payne and of Herold. They held Arnold and O'Laughlin and Atzerodt and Spangler and Doctor Mudd – all the supposed satellites of Booth, save one. John H. Surratt could not be found. Officers in company with Weichman and Holahan, boarders at his mother's house, who in the terror of the moment had given themselves up

on the morning of the fifteenth, traced him to Canada, as has already been noticed, but had there lost track of him. They had returned disappointed; and now Weichman and Holahan were in solitary confinement. Notwithstanding the large rewards out for his capture, as to him alone the all-powerful government seemed to be baffled. One consolation there was, however – if they could not find the son, they held the mother as a hostage for him, and they clung to the cruel expectation that by putting her to the torture of a trial and a sentence, they might force the son from his hiding place.

In the meanwhile the Bureau of Military Justice, presided over by Judge-Advocate-General Holt, had been unceasingly at work. General Baker with his posse of soldiers and detectives scoured the country far and wide for suspected persons and witnesses, hauled them to Washington and shut them up in the prisons. Then the Bureau of Military Justice took them in hand, and, when necessary, by promises, hopes of reward and threats of punishment, squeezed out of them the testimony they wanted. Colonel Henry L. Burnett, who had become an expert in such proceedings from having recently conducted the trial of Milligan before a military tribunal at Indianapolis, was brought on to help Judge Holt in the great and good work. In the words of General Ewing in his plea for Dr. Mudd:

The very frenzy of madness ruled the hour. Reason was swallowed up in patriotic passion, and a feverish and intense excitement prevailed most unfavorable to a calm, correct hearing and faithful repetition of what was said, especially by the suspected. Again, and again, and again the accused was catechised by detectives, each of whom was vying with the other as to which should make the most important discoveries, and each making the examination with a preconceived opinion of guilt, and with an eager desire, if not determination, to find in what might be said the proofs of guilt. Again, the witnesses testified under the strong stimulus of a promised reward for information leading to arrest and followed by convictions.

The Bureau conducted the investigation on the preconceived theory, adopted, as we have seen, by the Secretary of War, that the Confederate Government was the source of the conspiracy; and, by lavishing promises and rewards, it had no difficulty in finding witnesses who professed themselves to have been spies on the rebel agents in Canada and who were ready to implicate them and through them the President of the defunct Confederacy in the assassination. Richard Montgomery and Sanford Conover, who had been in personal communication with these agents during the past year, were eagerly taken into the employ of the Bureau, and made frequent trips to Canada, to return every time laden with fresh proofs of the complicity of the rebels.

To illustrate how the Bureau of Military Justice dealt with witnesses who happened to have been connected more or less closely with Booth, and who were either reluctant or unable to make satisfactory disclosures, here are two extracts from the evidence given on the trial of John H. Surratt in 1867.

The first is from the testimony of Lloyd, the besotted keeper of the Surratt tavern:

I was first examined at Bryantown by Colonel Wells. I was next examined by two different persons at the Carroll prison. I did not know either of their names. One was a military officer. I think some of the prisoners described him as Colonel Foster. I saw a man at the conspiracy trial as one of the Judges who looked very much like him.... I told him I had made a fuller statement to Colonel Wells than I could possibly do to him under the circumstances, while things were fresh in my memory. His reply was that it was not full enough, and then commenced questioning me whether I had ever heard any person say that something wonderful or something terrible was going to take place. I told him I had never heard anyone say so. Said he I have seen it in the newspapers.

He jumps up very quick off his seat, as if very mad, and asked me if I knew what I was guilty of. I told him, under the circumstances I did not. He said you are guilty as an accessory to a crime the punishment of which is death. With that I went up-

stairs to my room.

The next is from the testimony of Lewis J. Carland, to whom Weichman confessed his remorse after the execution of Mrs. Surratt:

He [Weichman] said it would have been very different with Mrs. Surratt if he had been let alone; that a statement had been prepared for him, that it was written out for him, and that he was threatened with prosecution as one of the conspirators if he did not swear to it. He said that a detective had been put into Carroll prison with him, and that this man had written out a statement which he said he had made in his sleep, and that he had to swear to that statement.

Let us add another; it is so short and yet so suggestive. It is from the testimony of James J. Gifford, who was a witness for the prosecution on both trials.

Q: Do you know Mr. Weichman?

A: I have seen him.

Q: Were you in Carroll prison with him?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did he say in your presence that an officer of the government had told him that unless he testified to more than he had already stated they would hang him too?

A: I heard the officer tell him so.

After a fortnight of such wholesale processes of arrest, imprisonment, inquisition, reward and intimidation, the Bureau of Military Justice announced itself ready to prove the charges it had formulated. Thereupon two proclamations were issued by President Johnson. One, dated May the first, after stating that the Attorney General had given his opinion "that all persons implicated in the murder of the late President, Abraham Lincoln, and the attempted assassination of the Hon. William H. Seward, Secretary of State, and in an alleged conspiracy to assassinate other officers

of the Federal Government at Washington City, and their aiders and abettors, are subject to the jurisdiction of and legally triable before a Military Commission,” ordered 1st, “that the Assistant Adjutant-General (W.A. Nichols) detail nine competent military officers to serve as a Commission for the trial of said parties, and that the Judge-Advocate-General proceed to prefer charges against said parties for their alleged offences, and bring them to trial before said Military Commission.” 2d, “that Brevet Major-General Hartranft be assigned to duty as Special Provost-Marshal-General for the purpose of said trial and attendance upon said Commission, and the execution of its mandates.”

The other proclamation, dated May 2nd, after reciting that “it appears from evidence in the Bureau of Military Justice, that the atrocious murder of the late President, Abraham Lincoln, and the attempted assassination of the Hon. William H. Seward, Secretary of State, were incited, concerted, and procured by and between Jefferson Davis, late of Richmond, Va., and Jacob Thompson, Clement C. Clay, Beverly Tucker, George N. Sanders, William C. Cleary, and other rebels and traitors against the Government of the United States, harbored in Canada,” offered the following rewards:

\$100,000 for the arrest of Jefferson Davis.

\$25,000 for the arrest of Clement C. Clay.

\$25,000 for the arrest of Jacob Thompson, late of Mississippi.

\$25,000 for the arrest of Geo. N. Saunders.

\$25,000 for the arrest of Beverly Tucker.

\$10,000 for the arrest of Wm. C. Cleary, late clerk of Clement C. Clay.

The Provost-Marshal-General of the United States is directed to cause a description of said persons, with notice of the above rewards, to be published.

At this date the President of the defunct Confederacy was a fugitive, without an army; and bands of U.S. Cavalry were already on the scout to intercept his flight. Military Justice, how-

ever, was too impatient to await the arrest of the prime object of its sword; and in obedience to the first proclamation proceeded without delay to organize a court to try the prisoners selected from the multitude undergoing confinement as the fittest victims to appease the shade of the murdered President. Over some of the "suspect" the Judge-Advocates for a time vacillated, whether to include them in the indictment or to use them as witnesses; but, after a season of rigid examinations, renewed and revised, they at last concluded that such persons would be more available in the latter capacity.

On the third day of May the funeral car, which, leaving Washington on the twenty-first of April, had borne the body of the lamented Lincoln through State after State, arrived at last at Springfield; and on the following day the cherished remains were there consigned to the tomb. On the sixth, by special order of the Adjutant-General, a Military Commission was appointed to meet at Washington on Monday, the eighth day of May, or as soon thereafter as practicable, "for the trial of David E. Herold, George A. Atzerodt, Lewis Payne, Michael O'Laughlin, Edward Spangler, Samuel Arnold, Mary E. Surratt, Samuel A. Mudd and such other prisoners as may be brought before it, implicated in the murder of the late President and in the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State and in an alleged conspiracy to assassinate other officers of the Federal Government at Washington City, and their aiders and abettors. By order of the President of the United States." And so, all things being in readiness, let the curtain rise.