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Eye Witness Tells of Lincoln Assassination In Washington Theater

"An eyewitness of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln!" is a phrase that even fifty-odd years has failed to strip of interest. In an office of the old national museum building at Washington, one can find George C. Maynard, curator of technology. An atmosphere of peace pervades the place until one speaks the magic words which brings to mind that fateful night at Ford's theater in April, 1865. Then Doctor Maynard tells of what he saw.

"That evening," says Doctor Maynard, referring to the night of April 14, 1865, "I went to Ford's. As everybody knows, the play was 'Our American Cousin.' My seat was in the first gallery, on a level with and in full view of the upper right-hand box which was reserved for President Lincoln and his party

"The occasion was an unusual one. The war had come to be regarded as an interminable conflict, something which would always engulf this country. Those in the theater that night were giving vent to perhaps their first real enthusiasm that the war had actually ended. It was to be a gala night. An atmosphere of festivity pervaded the place. Also, it was Laura Keene's benefit.

"Naturally, it was a patriotic performance. I still have a small scrap of paper on which I wrote the musical program. 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' 'Red, White and Blue,' and 'Marching Along' were played, while the entire company was to have sung 'Honor to Our Soldiers,' a patriotic song of the times.

"The president and his party did not arrive before the curtain rose. It was during the dairy scene when they came in. Miss Hart, playing Georgiana, was telling an American joke to Mr. Emerson, and he failed to catch the point. Twice she said to him: 'Why, can't you see it?' And he replied: 'No, I can't see it.' At this moment the presidential party entered, passing around the south side of the gallery to enter the box. The play was suspended until President Lincoln was seated, the audience having risen with one accord and cheered enthusiastically. After some time Georgiana said, with emphasis: 'Well, everybody can see that,' and Dundreary drawled: 'They ought to see it, you know.'

"It was about 10:30 when the pistol shot which sent the bullet at Lincoln was fired. Booth suddenly slid down from the front of the box onto the stage and rushed diagonally across, disappearing. He caught his foot in the flag decorations and made some exclamation which I did not understand, but no such dramatic speech as has popularly been accredited to him. Had he done anything of that kind I believe he would have been mobbed before he could have escaped. As it was, J. B. Steward, a man of athletic build, sprang onto the stage and was after Booth immediately.

"There was no panic, such as a fire would have caused. The entire audience was stunned, the real significance of the tragedy coming only after several minutes. The theater people swarmed upon the stage. An officer in military uniform managed to get to the president by climbing up from the stage into the box, the door having been barred. Laura Keene came quickly through the gallery with a pitcher of water, lending an odd note to the scene with her costume and make-up. The door of the box by this time was opened and she entered.

"Intense excitement reigned, yet no lack of self-control. There seemed to be a desire to lend whatever assistance was possible, while the air was electrical with a spirit of vengeance against Booth for the crime just committed. Several people climbed over seats, I myself helping one lady thus in making her exit. Some seats were broken. Yet, withal, the people left the theater slowly and quietly. It was about ten minutes before the president was removed, followed by Mrs. Lincoln supported by two gentlemen. A crowd of people filled Tenth street.

"At that time I was a member of the military telegraph corps of the war department, being a cipher operator. I rushed to the office. Persons I met on the way were ignorant of the tragedy. At the office the news had been learned, but no details, and D. H. Bates, manager of the office, asked for particulars.

"A full force of telegraphers spent the night in the office, sending out reports of the president's condition. It was eight o'clock on the following morning before I left for my lodgings. I walked along G. street. The morning was rainy, raw and cheerless. Between Thirteen and Fourteenth

streets, almost in front of Epiphany church, I met a small squad of cavalry, accompanied by a few military officers and civilians on foot. The band was proceeding quietly and with an evident desire to avoid public notice. They were escorting the president's body to the White House.

"There is one other memory of that time of sorrow which I retain vividly. On the morning the president's body began the journey to Springfield it was warm, bright and altogether a day best suited to rejoicing, yet all Washington had come down town to see the funeral procession. Processions, normally, are stretched out, but this one was made as compact as possible. In the front went a detachment of cavalry, wedge shaped. Very slowly they proceeded, making their way steadily into the crowds which swarmed the streets, forcing them silently back to the curb. Carriages containing officials, instead of going single file, went three and four abreast. The horses' footfalls were the loudest sounds, while sobs punctured the stillness of the watching multitude."

SABBATH MADE FOR MAN, NOT VISE VERSA COMMITTEE REPORTS

THE HAGUE, Feb. 12 (by Associated Press).—An indictment of "blue Sunday" advocates was returned in the report of a committee of the chamber of the Dutch parliament on a bill proposing to forbid amusements, curtail train service, etc., on Sundays.

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," said the report, killing the bill. "The closing of the theaters and the prohibition of games would lead many to seek amusement in a less innocent way. The reduction of passenger traffic on Sundays would prevent people who were shut up in close homes and narrow streets all the week from enjoying fresh air and nature on the Sabbath."

BIG ORDER OF KHAKI BOUGHT BY SOVIETS

LONDON, Feb. 12 (by Associated Press).—The Soviet government of Russia has recently bought privately from British firms 2,500,000 yards of khaki cloth for £1,375,000, says the Evening Standard. Payment was made by Moscow depositing gold at a Stockholm bank.

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