

Oct. 29, 1896, called on A. B. Wood, 110 W. 129th St. Harlem.

Shelburne

Mr. Wood in the Spring of 1864 was with the army before Petersburg. Early made his sudden trip up the valley threatening Washington and Mr. Wood's corps was ordered up the Potomac to the north of the city. The night before reaching Washington he was taken violently ill and was placed in the armory hospital; the armory hospital stood then on the ground now occupied by the National Museum, near the Smithsonian Institution. It was composed partly of barracks and tents; it could shelter about 1900 people. Mr. Wood was ill but a few days and as he was in hopes of promotion urged the physician to let him join his regiment; the physician refused saying that he had work for him in the Ordnance Department of the hospital. Mr. Wood spent the winter there and sent to Vermont for his wife. Mrs. Wood was eager to see all the great men, had seen President Lincoln several times. On the morning of April 14, 1865, the newspapers announced that General Grant would accompany President and Mrs. Lincoln to Ford's Theatre that night. Mrs. Wood had never seen General Grant and urged her husband to get tickets which he did. They went to the theatre and had seats about the middle of the orchestra, the Presidential box was to the right and above, so that they could look into it. About the middle of the first act Mr. Wood says there was a tremendous hurrahing, the band began to play "Hail to the Chief," the people all rose from their seats, waved their hats and handkerchiefs. Lincoln and his wife were entering with Major Rathbone and Miss Harris; (was much interested at this point in the sincere and deep emotion which Mr. Wood felt in telling the story. He was unable for a few minutes to go on, so powerfully did the scene seem to reproduce itself). The play was on and they had reached the garden scene where Lord Dunderbary and his lady love are on the stage. She complains that she feels a draught. He says, "Draught? there is no draught, the draught is over," looking up at Mr. Lincoln. Lincoln laughed heartily, and this, says Mr. Wood, was the last time that he ever laughed. They pass off the stage and Harry Hawkes came on; he was the American cousin; he carried a bottle which in some of the horse play of the stage had been called "hair dye," and as he comes on he holds it up saying, "Hello, hair dye, how are you?" Mr. Wood says that these were the last words to which President Lincoln listened. While this was going on Mr. Wood had his mind intent on the coming of Gen. Grant and whenever anyone

moved into the gallery leading to the boxes he glanced up and at this moment he saw a figure pass along the gallery and enter the door leading into the dressing room of the Presidential box. Mr. Wood is telling this seemed much moved and he evidently has all these years been laboring under the delusion that at this moment he should have given an alarm; he said to me, "This is where I did wrong, I might have saved the President's life. I knew all the leading men in Washington by sight, I did not know this man. I might have known that he had no business there." He bowed his head on his hands and seemed overcome by the notion that the President's death had been caused by his neglect. I assured him that I thought he was morbid, that he was not right. He says that he did not see Booth enter the Presidential box. The next thing he heard was confusion and looking up he saw the president's head drop back on his chair; he said there was no motion excepting the falling back of the head, no distortion of the features. The next instant Booth sprang over the gallery of the box; he was suspended in the air, both hands outstretched, when he cried, sic semper tyrannus! As he came down his stirrup caught in the drapery and was torn off; this was what caused the breaking of his leg, as he could easily have made the jump if his foot had not caught. Mr. Wood described vividly how he held in his right hand a dagger, the blade toward him. In his falling he of course open his hands to save himself instinctively and he struck the stage with open palms, the dagger was left where he fell and he went off the stage diagonally to the left (?). The confusion in the theatre was great at this moment. Some one cried, "The President is assassinated!" Laura Keane came around to the front of the stage exclaiming, "He is gone!" Mr. Wood thought she said "He is caught" and he says he was completely frenzied, forgetting his wife, he rushed pell mell over seats in front of him, crying "Hang him! hang him!" Hundreds of others did the same thing. He clambered on to the stage. Now Booth in entering the president's box looked the door behind him. Those who reached the box from the outside were unable to enter. Major Rathbone was at first unable to get the door open. Wood says that he and others helped Dr. C Charles A. Leale--whom he says, is now a physician in New York--into the box from the stage. He declares that contrary to Nicolay and Hay's story, Leale was the first man in the box. They say Crawford and two

or three army men. Wood says Laura Keane was the first person in the box who entered through the door. He says there was no blood to be found on the President's body, that Leale felt him all over and it was only when his finger touched the bullet hole at the base of the brain, that he discovered where the wound was. When Wood turned round helping Leale into the box, he discovered that the theatre was empty. He went out and found his wife and a friend waiting for him. He asked why they had left; they said the cry was raised that the theatre was to be blown up and they rushed out, and they stood on a woodpile until the president's body was brought out. Wood has a dramatic story of an incident in the transfer of Booth's body four years after his death. Booth's body was given to his friends and it was carried through the arsenal yard where it had been buried, to an undertakers kept by a man named _____ on the corner of F St. and the alley through which Booth had escaped after the assassination. The news was spread that the body was in this shop and thousands of people gathered about it at night, saying the body should never have decent burial. The undertaker carried the remains through his back door into this alley and to the very stable at the rear of the theatre where Booth had kept the horse by which he escaped on the night of April 14.

Wood tells of seeing the President frequently in Washington; says the night that Bishop Simpson delivered his oration on Our Country (?), Lincoln was present and sat in a seat almost across the aisle from himself, gave close attention to the oration; at its close it occurred to Mr. Wood that Bishop Simpson would probably speak to Mr. Lincoln. He came down to Mr. Lincoln's pew, Mr. Lincoln held out his hand and said, "That was a good lecture, Bishop, but you did not strike 'ile." Bishop Simpson said, "That is so, Mr. President, I did ~~not~~ forget the 'ile."

Mr. Wood tells a very sharakteristic of Tad and his father. They were in a box at the theatre one night, Mr. Lincoln intent on the play. Something was said that tad did not understand and he leaned over to his father and asked him a question. Mr. Lincoln paid no attention; the boy sprang up and putting one hand on his shoulder and the other on his knee, put his face down close to his and began to insist. Mr. Lincoln did not notice him. Sunddenly Tad, out of patience,

caught the President's head, putting his hand over his eyes and drawing it down close to his own little body. ^{Wood} Mr. Lincoln said the amused and loving way in which Lincoln gave up and listened to his boy was one of the most touching things he had ever seen.