BOOTH'S BURIAL

The Disposal Made of the Assassin's Remains.

SOME REMARKABLE COINCIDENCES

How the Newspaper Men Struggled to Get the News.

IDENTIFYING THE BODY.

The recent death of Capt. Edward P. Doherty recalls the fact that it is just thirty-two years ago when, with Lieut. Col. Conger and Lieut. Baker of Baker's secret service, and a detachment of twenty-five men of the 16th New York Cavalry, he returned here with the body of John Wilkes Booth and the person of D. C. Herold, who together had rapidly fled from the city after Booth shot President Lincoln, on the night of April 14. They had been captured near Bowling Green, Va., where Booth received his mortal wound a few days before. The steamer on which they came up the river had made a short stop at Alexandria, and was directed to deliver the prisoners, both the dead and live one, on board a monitor, then used as a prison ship, at the navy yard, on which Payne, Arnold and O'Laughlin were confined. The steamer at once proceeded to the Eastern branch, and making fast to the monitor, the body of Booth, wrapped in a gray army blanket, was placed on a bench on the forward part of the monitor, while Herold was taken below, placed in irons, and locked up, and young Jett, who had accompanied the party to the barn where the capture was made, was sent to the guard house at the navy yard gate, and subsequently to the old Capitol and Carroll prisons. Mrs. Surratt, Spangler and others had been sent to these prisons. A number of persons used as witnesses before the military commission convened in the following month, in the old chapel room of the penitentiary, were also confined in these prisons by that time.

A Fortnight of Suspense.

When it is recalled that over two weeks had passed since the perpetration of the crime and up to this time there had been nothing tangible made public as to Booth's whereabouts, it is not surprising that the public was becoming impatient and many were beginning to doubt that Booth was the assassin, and, in fact, doubted if there were any real grounds for suspecting those already in custody. It was known that Major Richards, superintendent of the metropolitan police, was in Ford's Theater when the fatal shot was fired, and, becoming satisfied in a short time that Booth was the perpetrator of the deed, had frequented the house of Mrs. Surratt and had taken flight across the Navy Yard bridge, he at once ordered out the entire force, searched Mrs. Surratt's house in less than three hours after the tragedy and had a posse ready to pursue the assassin when the government should furnish horses. Owing to red tape, this posse could not leave Washington till twelve hours after the shooting. The officers went over the route taken by Booth and Herold, and, as they learned afterward, were within a few hundred yards of the hiding place of Booth and Herold, but were thrown off the scent. Though this posse failed to capture the fugitives, the information obtained proved valuable, leading, as it did, to the watching of Mrs. Surratt's house, where Payne, the assailant of Secretary Seward, came a short time afterward and was arrested.

Jealousy of Detectives.

Col. L. C. Baker's detectives were in New York at this time, his entire force engaged in the detection and arrest of "bounty jumpers," and were ordered here and arrived on April 16. Besides these there were the detective officers attached to the office of Col. Ingraham, provost marshal for the department of Washington; and those of Col. O'Beirne, provost marshal under the draft. Our own metropolitan police detectives and some independent corps were also at work. As in duty bound, information obtained by the police was at once furnished the government. Such, however, was not the course of other forces, and some of them evidently did not know the nature of reciprocity in detective work.

There was so much jealousy among some of the detectives that this was regarded as the cause of the failure to capture Booth promptly. Though many suspects were being arrested, the work of forging the chains of evidence was often rendered difficult or useless. It had become evident that the first information obtained by the police, that the flight was into lower Maryland, was correct, and that section was overrun by officers, some of them independent, were stimulated by the heavy rewards offered. As time progressed and the general public were settling down to the belief that Booth and Herold had either committed suicide or left the country—and there were some who always believed that Booth had escaped from the country—the military authorities and most of the detective officers became certain that they had at least made the attempt to cross the Potomac, if they had not succeeded in getting over.

Doherty's Start.

Colonel Baker and some of his men became convinced that they had reached Virginia soil and he determined o scour the Northern Neck for clues. He therefore, unfolded his plans to Lieutenant Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker, and having secured a detail of twenty-five men, under Capt. E. P. Doherty of the 16th New York Cavalry, and a steamer from the quartermaster's department, the party left the 6th street wharf at sundown Monday, April 24, on the steamer John S. Ide. Of course the fact of the departure was known, but that they were going in pursuit of Booth was surmised by but few. Only two days before a number of confederate officers having been brought here from Virginia, it was thought the expedition was to bring in other officers from that state. The condition of the public mind was at the time such that almost any report would be taken as the truth. When these captured officers left the provost marshal's office, then on 14th street above G street, under the escort of a company of regular infantry, for the old Capitol, a report that they were prisoners connected with the assassination raised a mob of hundreds of persons, who hooted and stoned them along G street. Several of the prisoners and soldiers were struck by missiles, but the military showed the effect of discipline by marching steadily onward and safely landed their charge at the old Capitol. From this the condition of the public mind may be inferred. The news of the arrival of the body created the greatest excitement throughout the community.

On the Monitor.

The iron-clad prison ship was under Commander E. E. Stone, and the prisoners were guarded by a detachment of marines under Capt. Frank Monroe. The monitors were specially interesting in those days, but when it had become known that Booth had been captured and his body was on board of an ironclad, for that day at least the vessel became the chief attraction of the yard. Hundreds stood about the dock and did their best to get out to it. Only those who could produce a pass from the office of the Secretary of War (outside of the officers of the vessel and yard and the mechanics engaged at work on it) were permitted on board, and all papers by which admission was sought were vised by an officer, while a sentry stood guard at the landing. All boats not belonging to the yard or the vessel were kept away, and newspaper men for once were thwarted. It is said that one of them, by personating a blacksmith and carrying a heavy bolt, succeeded in passing the guard and getting aboard. Then he was afraid to go within ten feet of the body, which was kept covered, or to ask a question. In his imagination the doors of the old Capitol were opening for him, and he was glad to get ashore and drop his disguise, having seen no more on the monitor than he could from the dock. There were several persons taken on board during the morning to identify the body.

One, a woman accompanied by one of Baker's men, attempted to clip a lock of Booth's hair, but was prevented from doing so by the officer, who grabbed her hand and threatened her with arrest. At the same time, he felt that the identification of the body as that of Booth could not have been made more certain, than by this act, as the woman knew him well, and was one of his most ardent admirers. The identification was also made more certain by the examination of the back of the neck, for a scar, made by the knife of Dr. Frederick May when a few months before he had removed a small tumor for Booth.

Others also identified the body by the general appearance. Surgeon General Barnes and some of the officers of the War Department went on board the monitor to view the body. In the afternoon some of the surgeon general's staff drove down, one with a case of instruments. These gathered around the body, and from the neck three or four vertebrae were removed. These showed the course of the ball, fired by one of the soldiers, which caused death, passing, as it did, entirely through the spinal marrow. Among the specimens in the Army Medical Museum these are on exhibition.

Burying Booth.

During the morning it was supposed that a coffin would be required for the remains and in the joiner shop the making of a box to be ready for such purpose was commenced. The information that the coffin was being made rapidly spread through the yard, and many of the employes, then numbering nearly three thousand, asked the privilege of driving a nail in it. Many were allowed to do so. The result was that the nails were driven so closely that the heads formed wide black lines on the sides and ends. It is doubtful if it had been used as intended that it would have answered more than a temporary purpose.

Another disposition of the body was, however, determined on, but it was impossible to learn from those in authority what it was. The newspaper men could only wait and see what they could from the dock. After the surgeon general's party had left the monitor the blanket was drawn around the body of Booth and loosely sewed while several government detectives stood about. One of the steamers of the quartermaster's department made fast to the monitor, and a boat manned by half a dozen sailors appeared. Something that resembled the blanket-covered body was placed in it, and three or four of the detectives followed. The boat was rowed away toward Giesboro'. The steamer got under way a few minutes later, turning into the Potomac and passing down the river. It was given out that the body was transferred to a gunboat, taken to sea, and dropped to the bottom, and this statement was generally accepted and published as true. The fact is that the body was landed by the rowboat at the lower part of the arsenal (now the Washington barracks) and no one was allowed to approach it. The old penitentiary, from which the prisoners had been removed during the war, was then used in part for the storage of army supplies, the cells and workshops being filled. Directions had been given to

bury the body in one of the cells, and replace the floor. Owing to the thorough manner in which the work had been done, especially about the cells, the job appeared to be one impossible to execute. This fact was reported by the foreman, who had set two laborers to work. The old store room was then selected, and by 9 o'clock at night a hole of ample size was prepared.

Booth's First Grave.

This spot is a few feet south of the east door of the commanding officer's residence at the arsenal. The grave being dug, the body was placed in an arms case, and a wagon bore it to the yard of the building, from whence it was carried by the laborers and placed in the grave. There were present a representative of the Secretary of War, Col. Benton, commanding the arsenal, two of Baker's detectives and four or five employes of the ordnance department, who had been pledged to secrecy. After the grave had been filled up and most of the brick paving relaid, the party dispersed, the representative of Secretary Stanton taking the keys after the door had been securely locked.

The report was at once started that the body had been placed on a gunboat, with orders to drop it in the ocean. The Star, however, on the following Sunday found good ground for including with the prevalent reports the statement that the body had been buried in the penitentiary building, and published an account of the burial the following Monday. The body rested in its secret grave for some months, during which time Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Herold and Atzerot were, with others, confined and tried in the other end of the building, and hung and buried in the inclosure, while Dr. Mudd, O'Laughlin, Arnold and Spangler were sentenced to the Dry Tortugas. Thus, while Booth's body rested in one end of the building, four of his alleged associates were near the other end, and when, a few months later, Capt. Wirz was hung at the Old Capitol prison for inhuman treatment of prisoners at Andersonville, his body was buried near them, and not far from where a number of English soldiers, who were killed by an explosion at the arsenal in August, 1814, were buried. Like the body of Booth, they were locked within the high brick walls.

The Graves Marked.

Some months after the burial of the assassins a simple head board, with the name of each, was put at the head of the graves, so that if their friends ever obtained permission to remove the bodies no mistake should be made. Thus they lay for a few years, but when the ordnance department turned the place over for a military post or barracks, and the demolition of at least those portions of the penitentiary used for the prison proper and the convict work shops was determined on, the remains were removed and the graves obliterated.

The bodies, including Booth's, were taken to the lower one of the two large store houses, now barracks, on the east side of the grounds, and placed under the flooring. This action seemed to indicate a disposition to bury them in the sea of oblivion, and it was thought that two resurrections would suffice for a few years at least. Toward the close of President Johnson's administration, in 1868, the bodies were delivered to the friends and families of the assassins.

That of Booth was the first taken away. The work of removing it was intrusted to a Baltimore undertaker, Mr. Weaver, who was directed to have the remains identified before taking them to Baltimore. It was suggested that a dentist who had done some work upon Booth's teeth could identify the body. Mr. Weaver was to proceed with the utmost secrecy, and called to his assistance Mr. R. F. Harvey of F and 10th streets, with whom was Mr. W. R. Speare, who has since succeeded him at that location. It was late in the afternoon when the remains were exhumed at the arsenal, and on the box being opened the young dentist at once examined the teeth and identified the work he had done for John Wilkes Booth. Mr. Weaver took charge of the box and contents, and drove with it in Mr. Harvey's wagon through the alley opening on F between 9th and 10th streets, to the rear of Mr. Harvey's place. Through this alley Booth rode out the night of the assassination. The rear wall of the theater building stands on this alley, and at the time Booth's remains were driven to Mr. Harvey's back door, the door through which he escaped from the building to his horse, held in the alley by Spangler, was but a few feet distant.

It is also a coincidence that the body was not only carried in the same alley through which Booth escaped, but it was placed in a new coffin in a stable on the south side of the alley adjoining one that Booth had sometimes used for his horse.

Viewing Booth's Body.

It so happened the day the remains were removed a Star reporter was in Mr. Harvey's work room when the rattling on the cobble stones called the men out. With them went the reporter, and helped them to bear the box to the stable then used as an annex to the work room. When the top was removed it was found that what remained of the body was wrapped in the same army blanket in which it had been brought to Washington. While the flesh and skin had shrunk from the bones, and had almost entirely disappeared, much of the clothing remained. The condition of the hair was remarkable. It was oily and clammy, and had evidently grown some after death, and when the head was taken up, the dark hair hung down low enough to have nearly reached the shoulders. It was remarked that except for the mildew, it needed but slight combing to dress it. The skeleton was hastily looked over, and it was observed that the small bone of one leg had been fractured, and on one foot was a shoe which had been made of a boot by cutting off the top and slitting the instep. Thus was confirmed some of the testimony which had been given before the military commission. The head having been replaced in the blanket with the rest of the body, the whole was lifted out and placed in a temporary coffin. The blanket was left, covering the body, and the top of the coffin was screwed down. Mr. Weaver then conveyed it at once to the depot, and in a short time had it at his place in Baltimore. The following day the body was buried in the family lot of the Booths.

Applications for the remains of the other assassins were also made, and relatives of Mrs. Surratt and Herold secured for them a Christian burial, while friends of the family of Payne, who came from Georgia, Atzerot's from Port Tobacco, and Capt. Wirz's from Georgia, attended to their interment in local cemeteries.