The COMMERCIAL APPEAL
MEMPHIS

Sunday March 26, 1922

Editorial.

A Myth of the Sixties.

McCready Sykes, who conducts an interesting department in Commerce and Finance, writes thus in a recent number of that valuable publication:

Has anyone ever heard of this "tradition?" Someone signing himself "Rusticus" writes to the New York Evening Post that

It is well known by many people still living in Richmond, Va., that John Wilkes Booth preached during the '80's for five years or more at Monumental Episcopal Church under the name of Dr. Armstrong and afterward had a church in Atlanta, Ga., and died a natural death during the '90's.

This is without exception the most amazing legend, myth, old wives' tale, of all that group of traditions of the continued existence somewhere of persons well known to be dead, that we have ever heard. We should really like to know if any of our readers have ever heard the story repeated, suggested at or hinted in any way, and should be glad if any who have ever heard it, if there be any such person, would write us about it. If there was a Dr. Armstrong preaching during the '80's at the church named his family probably heard of the wild imagining if it has ever before been formulated in anyone's brain.

It is the most preposterous yarn taht has ever come under our notice. If anyone has ever heard of it we should be glad if they would write us.

The dramatic escape of John Wilkes Booth, after his dastardly murder of President Lincoln, furnished a convenient medium for the fabrication of all manner of strange stories concerning his subsequent career. The searchlight of the press was not at that period as pitiless in dogging the footsteps of those in whom the public felt an interest for any reason and the hostile attitude of the two sections of our country was a circumstance which contributed to mystification.

During the whole of the subsequent period the Booth myth has circulated, more or less, in some form. We have been tolerably familiar with it, though we can not now remember the specific details set out by Mr. Sykes or any others. However, we will add that we have never credited any of them; for we have never doubted that Booth met his just fate in the manner commonly accepted by the public.

But we cannot agree with Mr. Sykes in the skepticism which he evinces concerning the possibility of one playing such a role as is attributed to the supposititous "Dr. Armstrong." We happen to know at the moment a gentleman holding the most respectable station, concerning whose past nothing at all is known. Yet his conduct in his present environment is above reproach, and his talents commend him to general esteem. Truth is still stranger than fiction.