IS WILKES BOOTH DEAD OR NOT? (P. 96-97)

Our readers know that there are certain persons vehemently asserting that J. Wilkes Booth is still alive, and is now living in Ceylon or some of the adjacent Islands. The subjoined letters would seem to settle the question beyond further controversy:-

Editor St. Louis Republican:

Up to a very recent date I was among a great many of Uncle Sams's subjects adhering to the ideas that J. Wilkes Booth is still living. I was not one of these, either, who entertained this idea merely upon the grounds that there was some probability of its being true. I entertained it after hearing statements made by a person who had some opportunity of knowing more about the affair than any other person I had ever met with; and this individual (an attache at Ford's Theatre on the night of the assassination,) gave me such a string of circumstantial evidence bearing upon the case, that I could not help thinking that the body which was brought to the navy-yard, near Washington City, must have been the body of some one else, and not the remains of J. Wilkes Booth. Here the matter rested until last July, when I came across a paragraph in a newspaper, which stated that Dr. May identified Booth's body by a scar upon his neck. Dr. May, being a relative of mine, and one upon whom I could rely, I sat down and wrote him the following letter, and I give you his answer to it:

High Hill, Mo., July 12, 1867.

Cousin Frederick: I have seen a statement from the notorious detective Gen. Baker going the rounds of the press, and in it you are mentioned as the physician who identified the body of J. Wilkes Booth from a scar upon his neck, caused by a surgical operation you performed upon him (Booth) before the late war.

Now that there has been another plausible story published to the effect that Booth is still living, I want to ask you this question, "Was the dead body the Government paid one hundred thousand dollars for really the body of J. Wilkes Booth?"

I don't know of anything, now that theprejudices of those days have somewhat subsided, that would keep you from answering this question.

There is some things in connection with the late war the truth of which I never expect to get, but I would like to have this matter forever settled in my mind by your answer.

Your cousin,

BARTON K BRISCOE

(Copied verbatim)

Washington, D. C. July 27, '67

Dear Barton: I duly received yours of the 12th inst., asking. "Was the dead body the government paid one hundred thousand dollars for really the the body of J. Wilkes Booth?"

I don't know what sum the Government paid for the body you allude to. I can however, positively state that the body I examined at the Navy-yard; in this city at the request and summons of the officers of the Government, was the body of J. Wilkes Booth, and that I identified it as his, not only by the features, but also by a scar on his neck, the result of a surgical operation performed by me on Booth some year or two before the assassination of the President.

Your cousins desire to be remembered to you.

Truly Yours,

JOHN FREDERICK MAY, M. D.

Now that you have read them, my reader, what do you think about the matter? I know some will say this is another humbug. And I will say right here, believe what you please. It makes very little difference to me whether these letters change your mind or not. I know Dr. May's answer to my letter has changed my views in regard to this matter considerably, and if you knew him as well as I do perhaps it would change yours.

BARTON K. BRISCOE

HIGH HILL., Mo., Oct. 17, 1867.