# As One Expert to Another

**THIS ONE MAD ACT. By Izola Forrester. (Hale, Cushman & Flint. $3.00.)**

REVIEWED BY OTTO EISENSCHIML.

*(Author of "Who Murdered Lincoln?")*

THE question of whether or not John Wilkes Booth really was the man shot on Garrett's farm has been the subject of lively controversies for many years. Into the welter of old arguments Izola Forrester now introduces a new version which, unfortunately, only tends to increase the existing confusion. For, although she is apparently sincere in her belief that she is Booth's grandchild and that the actor escaped from Capt. Doherty's troopers, she neither claims nor establishes convincing proof for her thesis.

But even if one admits that many essential documents which may have been in evidence at one time were purposely destroyed, it seems that the author could have done better with what was within her reach. Why weren't the pictures of John Wilkes Booth as a little boy brought forth as exhibits? Why not his photograph, alleged to nave been taken in 1868 and signed in his own hand? Why are the assassin's pictures, inscribed to his daughter with words of endearment, withheld from the reader? Instead, the book contains six familiar portraits of Booth in his early manhood. Their resemblance to his alleged son is not exactly overwhelming, although we are assured that even strangers observed the likeness and commented on it. And why does Miss Forrester fail to reproduce a single example of Booth's handwriting from old prompt books, several of which she claims to have in her possession? Such evidence would be far more eloquent than all the historically meaningless illustrations with which the volume is cluttered.

As an historian the author is woefully inaccurate. Her errors are the more inexcusable as practically her entire account of the assassination is merely culled from well-thumbed books. Here are a few of her gross misstatements: It was not proven that Spangler had cleared the way for Booth, and he was not given a life sentence. He and the other state prisoners were not pardoned by Johnson in the spring of 1869, because Johnson was then no longer President. Lafayette C. Baker's book was not officially authorized—anything but that. The assassin's flesh was not lacerated, his leg was not set in Dr. Mudd's parlor, and there was no mysterious stranger in the doctor's house. The names of Dr. Stuart (Stewart). Ziegen (Zisgen) and Merric (Merrick) might just as well have been copied right as wrong, and D. D. Dana—shades of Finis L. Bates!—was a lieutenant, not a general. Maj. O'Beirne did not report to Washington from Port Conway and did not ask for orders. Col. Baker's ghost writer was not Townsend, but Headley, and Booth never played in Birmingham in the early '60s, for Birmingham was not founded until 1871.

Still less pardonable is the assertion that Col. Conger "speaks, in his testimony, of an entrance at the rear" of Garrett's tobacco shed, through which Booth is supposed to have fled. This exit is vital to Miss Forrester's theory, but she refrains from giving any references, and a minute search through all available records fails to show that Conger made any such statement.

The author is entirely mistaken in her belief that Dr. Bickley's dossier as the alleged head of the Knights of the Golden Circle is her own sensational find. The reviewer has examined these papers several times quite in the open; they are known to several historians, and the reason for what Miss Forrester considers their "fifty years of concealment" in an old safe is quite commonplace.

The reprinting by the author of documents which already have been reproduced ad nauseam is in bad taste. The lifting of whole sections of available magazine articles is outright reprehensible. Incidentally, the story copied from the Century Magazine was published in 1890, not in 1880, and the man quoted was not Gen. John P. Garrett, but Col. John J. Garnett.

Apart from her excursions into general history, Miss Forrester has written a beautiful book. Her style is graceful and entertaining, and the adventures of her family are attractively pictured. The author may or may not be Booth's granddaughter—it is just as hard to disprove such stories as it is prove them—but the volume is well worth reading. The first part will find a ready response from lovers of literature dealing with theatrical events of the past generation, while the second part will be abundantly debated by the many students who are interested in Booth's eventual fate.

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