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J. WILKES BOOTH

The story of his alleged escape recalled by a lecture

A MAN WHO SAW HIM DIE

Tells of his last hours and explains the circumstances

SAM SMALL CONTRIBUTES A CHAPTER

To the history of the case, giving valuable and interesting information-- A strange story fully reviewed.

Yoakum, Tex., July 29,- (Special Correspondence.)- It may be that Eve didn't really eat an apple in the garden of Eden, that William Tell didn't shoot another apple off the head of his hopeful, that George Washington didn't hack the cherry tree with his little hatchet and make that incomprehensible declaration about his veracity, but nevertheless, the world will go on believing those romantic stories. They illustrate many things, but nothing more than the irrepressible vitality of pleasing myths.

More Modern Instances.

I have been meditating this peculiar instance of marvelous fiction because of some recent things that have come to my notice.

Take that constantly recurring story about the escape of Ney and his subsequent long residence incognito in North Carolina. The story has been told so often in the papers, with such details of evidence, as to make hosts of readers feel sure that the doomed, marshal never got himself shot at all in heroic form, but made a lucky escape to America to die comfortably as an humble and free citizen of the great republic.

Then, more interesting and modern still, comes the John Wilkes Booth case. A score of plausible stories of the escape of Booth from capture and death have been printed, with wealth of circumstantiality to support them, and thousands of people may be found all over the south who will never believe that Booth perished in the Garrett barn.

A Revival of the Question.

While in New Orleans the other day I saw in one of the city dailies a query and answer, as follows:

"E. P. C.: Please let me know whether there is any daubt that the person killed in the barn was Booth.

"Theee were some doubts expressed at the time and it was claimed that Booth had been seen after. But there is no reason to think this true."

The passing item would have been soon forgotten, but that on my arrival in Texas I found in The Galveston News the discussion fully renewed.

Major Sidney Smith, of Dallas, had given a strange account of Booth's connection, or rather lack of connection, with the assassination, and his story had drawn out a letter from Rev. Dr. R. B. Garrett, pastor of the First Baptist church of Austin, who is a son of the Garrett in whose barn Booth was discovered and who saw the death of the man.

Smith's Story.

Major Sydney Smith's story to the St. Louis paper was to the effect that Booth was in Richmond, Va., with friends on the evening of the assassination of President Lincoln; and that, upon hearing that he was accused of the bloody act, he did the unlikely and foolish thing of fleeing from a perfect alibi, from the instant ability to present himself to the federal commander in Richmond and prove the physical impossibility of his having been the assassin, he took flight by horse to Charleston, sailed to Europe and remained a fugitive, fearful wanderer on that continent - whether already dead or yet alive - the major is unfortunately still ignorant.

Who did kill Lincoln then?

The major has positive information that it was a semi-insane lieutenant of Quantrell's famous guerrillas who "left Richmond, stole into the city of Washington disguised as a farmer and killed President Lincoln." He escaped to the south, as the

story goes, and died in seclusion some years ago.

How then, did Booth's name get mixed in with the assassination?

The major says it was due to the vengefulness of a young woman in the theater companies who had been in love with Booth and abandoned by him. In the general paralysis of the dread transaction in the theater she recognized a sufficient general resemblance of the assassin to Booth to give her the inspiration to charge the crime upon him and the infuriated people immediately corroborated her charge and put the odium upon the innocent object of her malice.

A very unique and novelistic theory, indeed, but it vanishes into the most absurd grotesquerie of invention when brought to the touchstone of facts.

Dr. Garrett's Account.

Some years ago a San Antonio newspaper correspondent invented a thrilling Booth survival story and while it was extant a gentleman in Gainesville, Texas wrote to Rev. Dr. Garrett for the truth of the event of Booth's capture and death. Dr. Garrett, who is known and respected as a gentleman of most irreproachable character, then wrote the following interesting and valuable letter in reply:

"Austin, Tex., May 19, 1890.- Dear Sir: In regard to the recent article claiming that John Wilkes Booth is still alive I would say that the gentleman's statement proves anew the truth of the old proverb that "There is nothing new under the sun."

For many years I have kept a scrapbook devoted entirely to literature referring to the death of President Lincoln and the capture and death of the conspirators. I have carefully preserved in this scrapbook all the newspaper articles on the subject coming under my observation. Upon reference to this book I find no less than ten different statements similar to Mr. Lewan's, all claiming that Booth is still alive and all locating him in a different part of the world. I have seen and talked to a ma man who was willing to swear that he had interviewed Mr. Booth in Calcutta; another who was positive that he had recognized him in the army of the khedive of Egypt.

You will doubtless remember the sensation caused some years ago by the claim that Rev. Mr. Armstrong, the rector of an Episcopal church in Charleston, S. C., was Booth in disguise. The reverend gentleman was much annoyed by the curious public and was finally compelled to show by his family history that there was no mystery whatever in his life.

Any one who has taken the pains to read the history on the subject can answer the question for himself, but for those who have not I will state the following facts:

1. John Wilkes Booth was one of the most strikingly handsome men I have ever seen. None who ever looked upon his face could ever forget it or mistake any one else for him. He was, also, from his profession, known all over the land. His pictures were exhibited in every city of any consequence. Many of the men pursuing hi him were personally acquainted with him, perhaps not one but who would have known him on sight.

2. There is not a missing link in the chain stretching from the theater in Washington, where he fired the fatal shot, to the barn on my father's farm, where he died. Traced, step by stepq from the door where he mounted his horse to the house of Dr. Mudd, where he had his broken leg set. (Dr. Mudd never denied what he did, and for his professional services was banished to the Dry Tortugas.) From Dr. Mudd's house, on the shores of the Potomac, the ferryman who ferried Booth and Herold across the river at midnight, was found and he never denied what he did. The farmer who took them in his wagon from the south bank of the Potomac to the Rappahannock came forward to tell his story and is well known. The ferryman who bore them over the latter river is still alive. The men to whom Booth and Herold revealed their identity on the river bank were reliable men.

Then, was it likely that in these days of horror and of dread that anybody else should claim to be the men on whose heads a price was set? The men who knew Booth horrified at finding him on their hands, knowing as they did of the proclamation

condemning to death without trial any one found harboring or assisting the fleeing conspirators, took the very first opportunity to rid themselves of their unwelcome burden, and introduced them to my father as wounded conferate soldiers returning from Appomattox. So you see, not one link in the chain of evidence is missing.

3. The dying man's words acknowledged his act: "Tell my mother I died for my country. I did what I thought was best to do." Again, referring to the burning barn, "Captain, it is hard that this family should suffer for what I have done. They don't know who I am."

4. The identification of the dead man's body was complete. Standing by I saw it done. First, the picture of the young actor, so well known everywhere, was laid by the dead man's face. God never made two men so exactly alike. Then point by point the printed description, held in the hand of the detective, was verified. The height, color of hair, eyes, all exact, every scar and mark. Thenthe crowning evidence, on the arm of the dead man was his name in India ink, done long years before.

Why the secrecy in regard to the body? Well, if you had lived near Washington during those troublous times and had known something of the wild rage of the people, this would be answer enough. Two other reasons suggest themselves to me. One, a petty spite which refused to give the assassin decent burial; the other, not so generally known, was, the body had been shamefully mutilated. The brain had been taken out and part of the backbone removed. These can still be seen on exhibition in the medical museum in Washington. The body two years afterwards was given up to the family by President Johnson and now sleeps in the family lot in Greenmount, Baltimore. I have stood by the grave and read all it bears- the name.

6. If Booth is still alive his family is not aware of his existence, and his old mother lived for twenty years never even naming the name of her dead boy. She died still grieving for his mad deed and his untimely end. I have positive proof in the shape of letters from Edwin Booth and other members of the family to prove that they knew that the man who died at my father's house April 26, 1865, was their brother

and son. The family never sympathized with his act, and while they loved and mourned the dead, they looked with horror on the mad act that wroght so much ill to them.

And now your request is complied with. No shadow of doubt rests in the minds of those who were familiar with the facts as to the fate of the slayer of Abraham Lincoln. I suppose these stories will be told for years to come, and like the stories of the lost Dauphin of France, half a century hence men will claim that somehwere the gifted young actor, who wrecked his own life and plunged a nation into trouble and woe by his own mad deed, is still living in a green old age.

R. B. GARRETT.

The statement of Dr. Garsett and the opinion of Colonel Smith are quite conflicting and the public is at liberty to judge which is correct.

Will T. Hawkins.

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Described in a Lecture.

And, again, last Monday evening, before a great audience at the Georgetown, Tex., chautauqua, Dr. Garrett in a simple, direct manner told the story with very livid coloring of the historic affair as it occurred before his eyes, and nome who heard him carried away a lingering doubt that the man whom Boston Corbett shot in the Garrett burning barn was John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln.

Corbett, by the way, afterwards became doorkeeper, I believe, of one of the houses of the legislature of Kansas, developed a violent case of insanity, and is now confined in one of the lunatic asylums of that state.

Andrew Johnson's Proofs.

While I was associated with ex-President Andrew Johnson, at Greenville, in 1872-3, he was a candidate for nomination by the democratic party for congressman for the state at large. In order to help defeat him, that stormy petrel of all sorts of politics, ex-Governor Henry S. Foote, formerly of Mississippi, but then living in

Nashville

Nashville, revived the Mrs. Surratt execution business against Mr. Johnson. The Washington Chronicle published the long and vituperative document by Foote and I was employed by Mr. Johnson in going over all the documentary details of the assassination events to frame together the data of his defense, which was overwhelming in its facts and effectually silenced the charges made by Foote and his fellow-conspirators of that emergency.

In this work I became thoroughly conversant with the whole mass of testimony in possession of Mr. Johnson and it was flawless as to all the details of the conspiracy, as the government developed it, and of the events that followed upon its execution. Among other documents were those relating to Booth, his movements for weeks prior to the Ford's theater tragedy on the evening of April 14, 1865, the incidents of his flight, capture, death, treatment of his body, burial, with a complete copy of the diary found on his body and the subsequent trials and dispositions of his alleged co-conspirators.

Mr. Johnson had the most irrefragable proof, it seemed, that Booth was the assassin and Booth was the man killed in the Garrett farm. On these matters of identity of Booth he had not the slighest doubt.

Johnson's Theories.

What Mr. Johnson did not believe, in the light of after events, was that Booth assassinated Lincoln from purely sentimental patriotism toward the south and in a heroically martyr spirit. Wild and improbable as it may seem to state it now, yet the truth is that Andrew Johnson came to firmly believe that the assassination conspiracy was really suggested and engineered unknown to Booth, Payne, Herold, Atzeroth, Mrs. Surratt and others, by the congressional cabal that afterwards held control of that body, formulated the despicable legislation of that epoch, sought his impeachment after having failed to compass his death and finally engineered Grant into the presidency that their schemes of usurpation, tyranny and plunder might be approved and fully exploited.

Mr. Johnson had an ingenious and circumstantial line of argument by which he convinced himself of the truth of this view of the assassination plot and the carefully compiled data on which he based his argument still exists among his private papers in the hands of his daughter, Mrs. Patterson. One of the reasons that moved Mr. Johnson to seek a seat in congress, house or senate, for either would suffice his purpose, was to speak to the world and put into the records of the nation his views upon this matter along with a well-planned series of exposures of the rascalities of men and measures with which he had to deal as president. Only his death at the threshhold of his opportunity prevented forever those sensational revelations which he alone could make.

The Armstrong Double.

You will note that Dr. Garrett, in his letter, refers to the story that got currency in Atlanta and all over America with the late Dr. James G. Armstrong, of Atlanta, and in which it was claimed that Armstrong was the veritable John Wilkes Booth. That he will remain the mythical John Wilkes Booth to hundreds of people in and about Atlanta, who knew him personally, cannot be denied. You have only to ask them about it and they will say plainly that "Armstrong was Booth as surely as I am myself?" They believe it and will name to you the proofs - the marvelous family features, the lameness of the leg, the scars on the neck, the score of smaller particulars of poses, accents, penchants, likes and dislikes, foibles, etc., which are to them proofs strong as holy writ.

And one thing may be mentioned, that is remarkable-- that is, if you will compare the newspaper cuts of Dr. Armstrong with those of Edwin Booth, I venture to say that the resemblance will be so striking that if the cuts are not identified with the proper names under them not two out ten readers will be able to positively say which represents Booth and which Armstrong.

Edwin Booth's Visits to Armstrong.

But an episode that puzzles the few parties cognized of it is the secret interview that was held between Edwin Booth and Dr. Armstrong, on the occasion, I think it was, of Booth's last visit to Atlanta. I had the fact from the gentleman, whose personality and integrity are too well known in Atlanta to require a question of his veracity, that Dr. Armstrong requested him to let him (Armstrong) meet a friend for an important private interview in the study of the gentleman's residence. The permission was granted, the gentleman's family was sent visiting for the afternoo and the gentleman and Dr. Armstrong awaited the coming of the stranger, who arrived in aclosed-carriage at the appointed hour. This stranger was instantly recognized as Edwin Booth. He and Dr. Armstrong retiredto the study and shut themselves in for two hours. The gentleman himself remained out of sight, preventing purposely the need of an introduction to Mr. Both, andwhen the latter had departed, Dr. Armstrong thanked the gentleman, with deep emotion, for his kindness, and said simply this concerning the interview:

"I take it for granted that you recognized the gentleman who was with me, and I beg you to never mention this matter to any person while we both are alive."

The gentleman made the promise, of course, but to this day he does not know whether Dr. Armstrong meant by "we both" to indicate himself and the gentleman, or himself and Edwin Both. At any rate he told me the above facts since the death of Dr. Armstrong, and I need only add in this connection that it would take the testimony of three persons risen from the dead - John Wilkes Booth, Edwin Booth and Dr. Armstrong - to convince my friend that Armstrong was not John Wilkes Booth.

Armstrong Was Not Booth.

I am sure, however, that Armstrong was not Booth.

The people of Atlanta remember in the famous Armstrong church trial Dr. Armstrong spoke of his family history and that his kinships were pretty fully followed up to Canada and other parts of the country.

Sevesal years ago, before the death of Dr. Armstrong, I was engaged in a campmeeting at Plattsburg, Mo. The Presbyterian paster there is, or was, a Rev. Mr. Hughes. He told me all about his school boy days with Dr. Armstrong in Ohio and of their subsequent careers in the ministry. Hughes became an Episcopalian priest and, having some trouble in that communion, retired from it to become a Presbyterian minister. Armstrong became a Presbyterian minister, and, having some trouble in that communion, retired from it to become an Episcopalian priest. I told Dr. Armstrong of my meeting with Mr. Hughes and delivered the messages sent by the other and Dr. Armstrong confirmed all that Hughes had said.

I afterwards fully verified the facts by the mouths of witnesses in Sidney, O., in St. Louis and in Wheeling, W. V.

The Body of J. Wilkes Booth.

The readers of this will notice, in the letter of Rev. Dr. Garrett, that reference is made to the delivery of the body of J. Wilkes Booth, by order of President Johnson, to the Booth family.

Just before Mr. Johnson was to surrender the white house to President Grant he received a brief letter from Edwin Booth asking that the body of his unfortunate brother be delivered to the sexton of the Greenmount cemetery in Baltimore for interment with the bodies of others of the family dead. Mr. Johnson ordered the delivery made, and the body does now rest in that city of the dead.

The letter of Edwin Booth to Mr. Johnson is still in existence and is in the possession of Hon. Julius L. Brown, of Atlanta.

Mrs. Surratt's Body Also.

At the same time Miss Annie Surratt wrote to Mr. Johnson and asked that the body of her mother be delivered to the priest and sexton of the Catholic church in Baltimore, of which the daughter was a member, "that it might be buried in consecrated ground." On the back of the letter Mr. Johnson personally pencilled the

form of the order that was at once issued and the remains of Mrs. Surratt were delivered to the order of the daughter.

It is significant that Miss Surratt made the request of Mr. Johnson, because, as she stated, she feared that General Grant, when he should become president, would not accede to her request.

The letter of Miss Surratt is also in the possession of Mr. Brown. Both the letter of Mr. Both and Miss Surratt are autograph letters.

So, I think, the world may easily suspend further speculation as to the fate of J. Wilkes Booth. He was killed on the Garrett farm and his body rests in Greenmount cemetery, Baltimore.

S. W. S.