A. J. WALSMITH
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR
OSKALOOSA, IOWA

June 3, 1933

Mr. F. L. Black
c/o The Dearborn Independent
Dearborn, Mich.

Dear Sir:

Recently reading the book, JOHN WILKES BOOTH, by Francis Wilson, I notice the author frequently refers to you and quotes from your articles which appeared in the Independent some few years ago. He says you discovered that Finis L. Bates had "improved" an affidavit he took from some Enid, Oklahoma, person touching the death of the man David E. George, and that photostatic copy of the affidavit was published in the Independent for April, 1925.

Would it be possible for me to get copies of the Independent containing the matter pertaining to the Booth question, and Bates's book, "THE ESCAPE AND SUIDIDE OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH?"

For many years I have been rather a close student of Lincoln, but not until the last two years or so have I paid much attention to Bates's Booth, or any other Booth except the real one I have always believed was killed at the Garrett place in late April, 1865. Lately, however, I have become very much interested in that branch of the subject, all through a lecture I heard here about a year and a half ago by a Methodist preacher, the Reverend Doctor John W. Potter, then pastor of the church of that denomination at this place. To say that I was astonished at what Dr. Potter stated in that lecture, and also what I have heard him say at other times, in support of his theory that the Enid "mummy" was Booth, would be putting it mildly. It was this that started me on a hunt for the facts about the case. Dr. Potter followed Bates faithfully, but he added some interesting "facts" not in Bates's book. I will mention two, (1) that the Government had never paid the rewards offered for the capture of Booth, which he asserted flatly and emphatically had never been done, using as an argument that the Government so refused because there was "no proof" that Booth had been taken, and (2) that Booth had married in East Tennessee, taking out a license in his true name, and that a daughter was born of the union, and that the daughter lived in New York, N. Y.

As to the payment of the rewards, Dr. Potter was dead wrong, as I found out by writing the Treasury Department at Washington. As to the other statement, I suppose he got ~~that~~ his foundation for it from what has appeared in the last few years in the papers about some man going under the name of "John W. Booth" and claiming to be a cousin of John Wilkes Booth, who married a woman in [redacted] Tennessee, I think Franklin County,

and soon afterward deserted her. Wilson refers to this incident in his book. (In this connection, I saw just recently in the N. Y. Times Book Review that a woman, I think by the name of Page, but can not be sure as I am writing from memory, has got out a book, "MY GRANDFATHER, JOHN WILKES BOOTH," and I rather take it that this is the sequel to that marriage).

The more I study Bates's book the more it seems to be a deliberate perversion of the truth. From what I can learn, you have been active in placing the book in its true light, and I would be glad to hear from you and to get the matter you have published about it. Of course I mean to pay for it if you will let me know what it will be.

Do you know that the Reverend R. B. Garrett, a son of the Garrett at whose home Booth was killed and an eye witness to what took place there at the time, read Bates's book and wrote a review of the book? If you have not heard about this let me know and I will tell you the details. I mention this point because nowhere have I ever seen any mention of it.

Yours very truly

A. J. Walsmith

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