He Led the Pursuit of Booth

Captain S. D. Franklin for the First Time Tells the Complete Story of His Pursuit of Lincoln's Assassin to the Potomac—Services for Which the Secretary of War Thanked Him.

In a recent issue of the "Sunday Press" a correspondent told the story of his ride on horseback over the route through Maryland and Virginia, followed by J. Wilkes Booth in his flight after the assasination of Abraham Lincoln. The subject is so rich in new and valuable material that much had to be left unsaid within the limits of one article. The story which will now be told is published for the first time, and in thrilling interest, romantic color and historical worth, has not been equalled in the voluminous chronicles which have been made of those harrowing days.

The man who in reality led the pursuit of Booth, who did far more toward the capture of the fleeing assassin than all the rest of the legion of pursuers sent out by the Government, is Captain Stephen D. Franklin, of 23 North Fifth Street, the veteran detective who still follows his adventurous calling actively and successfully. Captain Franklin's wonderful story is proved in every detail by the records of the War Department, and by documents in his possession, which include the thanks of the War Department, acknowledging "the services rendered in the pursuit of the assassin of our late beloved President," addressed to Captain S. D. Franklin, Twentieth Pennsylvania Cavalry.

The orders of General Hancock recalled Captain Franklin from following the trail across the Potomac into Virginia, when he was on the point of running down Booth and Herold, and he therefore received no share of the large reward offered. But Captain Franklin was the man who discovered that Booth had stopped at the house of Dr. Mudd, and later at the residence of Captain Cox, and arrested Thomas Jones, the blockade runnner who helped Booth across the river. Until it was found that Booth had visited Dr. Mudd to have his broken leg set, it was not known whether he had gone north or south—to Canada or Richmond, and the army of cavalry men and detectives was completely at sea.

The first clue was found at Dr. Mudd's on the road from Washington to the Potomac River, and the ability of Captain Franklin set the pursuit on the right track. He was at the time of the assassination a captain in the Twentieth Pennsylvania Cavalry, on detached service with the special commissioner of the War and Navy Department, Col. H. S. Olcott and Hon. W. E. Chandler. After having been wounded in the Shenandoah Valley under General Hunter Captain Franklin returned to Philadelphia and was assigned on duty in the investigation of the gigantic frauds in the arsenals and navy yards during '64 and '65. This work he carried through in brilliant fashion, and assisted in the restoration of millions of dollars to the Government which had been filched by dishonest contractors.

CALLED FOR THE PURSUIT.

The adventures which nearly resulted in the capture and death of Captain Franklin as a fellow-conspirator with Booth because of his too-successful disguise as a Rebel worker, and his pursuit by a squad of cavalry while he was after the assassins of the President, began on the night of April 15, 1865, the day after the fatal bullet had been fired in Ford's Theatre.

The stirring tale is best told in the words of Captain Franklin as he recalled the incidents to "The Press" writer.

"I was routed out of bed at 11 o'clock on Saturday night, April 15," said he, "in my house at 4129 Chestnut Street, by Captain Thomas Sampson and Charles DeVoe, a New York detective. They rushed into my room, shouted 'The President is dead,' and showed me orders from the Secretary of War to report in Washington at once. We caught the midnight train and reached there in the early morning. As I walked up Pennsylvania Avenue the people seemed dumb and awestruck, every man looking at his neighbor with fear on his face. It impressed me beyond the power of words to tell. We went to the Kirkwood House, where President Andrew Johnson was then stopping, and while getting ready for breakfast there was a knock at the room door. A sergeant of the Marine Corps came in and said: 'Captain Franklin here? Compliments of General Auger, commander of the Department of Washington. He desires to see you at once.'

"I went to the office of General Auger and was received very cordially. He said:—

" 'Captain, I'm pleased to know you. You stand well in Washington. You are the man I want. I wish to tell you about the case. We have received information that these men who were in the assassination plot crossed the Navy Yard Bridge and have gone down through lower Maryland. One is riding a big roan horse, the other a little bay mare. This is one of the worst sections in the country. It is filled with fugitives from everywhere, and with a desperate lot of characters. At the last election for the Presidency, a man who voted for Lincoln was shot dead by a neighbor."

General Auger painted the dangers very black, and then said: 'Now will you go?' He offered me a guide and mount, and asked me whether I wanted any arms. 'No,' I said, to his surprise. 'They're armed and they'd shoot me long before I got to them if I have to depend upon rifles and revolvers to capture Booth and his comrades. I'll have to rely upon my ingenuity to get them."

"I went back to breakfast at the Kirkwood where 'Andy' Johnson was sitting in the dining-room with a heavy guard of marines all around the place. I got a splendid mount from General Auger, and started out about 11 o'clock alone with a guide who lived near Surrattsville, and a miserable wretch he turned out to be. As I rode along the road toward Surrattsville my brain was working busily, trying to find a plan of action, for I knew that my only hope lay in subterfuges and 'nerve.'

"My role came to me like an inspiration. At that time, Ben Wood, a noted Rebel emissary from Mississippi was in Canada with a large sum of Southern gold, sending out men to try to release the Confederate prisoners on the lakes and destroy the shipping. One of his right hand men was an Irishman named McGraw. I then wore reddish side-whiskers, and looked so Irish that you'd have sworn I had landed from the Emerald isle a week before. McGraw's name had been in the papers a great deal, and I knew that some of the Southerners along my line had heard of him. I'm McGraw, I said to myself, but if I had known the trouble this would make for me, I wouldn't have been so pleased with myself.

"In the afternoon I saw an old man butchering near the road, and I rode up to him. An old gray coat was hanging on a tree near by, and I knew that I must have that coat. After talking with the butcher and sounding him, I said, 'I'm going down into God's country, and I want to get away from these Yanks as quickly as possible. I'll trade coats with you and give you $5 to boot.' I didn't give him time to think it over, but took the gray coat, threw him my black one and a $5 note, and went on looking more like the redoubtable McGraw than ever. I wished afterward that I had examined this gray coat more carefully. But that's getting ahead of my story.

"General Augur had told me to hunt up a man named Roby, who kept a store near Surrattsville. On arriving at Roby's I sent Smooth on to Surrattsville, as he was known there; in fact, he lived three miles east of Surrattsville. I rode up then at dusk and hailed the house. Out came a tremendous man, weighing about 300 pounds, with long gray hair down over his shoulders. He held a double barreled shotgun, and as he asked "Will you light?" I heard the click-click as the hammers were cocked. "Hardly, under the circumstances," said I. I rode closer and leaned over to whisper "I'm from General Auger." The old man dropped his gun, grasped my hand and hauled me into the house. Old Roby grabbed me by the hand and really pulled me i nthe house, and said; "If you're a friend of General Augur's, I want you to sit right down in that chair. That's the chair General Jackson sot in when he was President of the United States." He was a hardshell Baptist, and a big-hearted man, but he swore with every breath, cursing the "secesh," "the reptiles," "the varmints," and what not. He stopped swearing at the Southern cause just long enough to pronounce a blessing at supper that was as long as his table. Then he broke out again. He knew nothing, and only had suspicions about the people around him. "Couldn't trust a sarpint among them."

"As we walked toward the store after supper Roby saw two fellows run out and toward the tavern at full tilt. They had seen me and were bent on putting the innkeeper and the crowd of loafers on their guard. "Catch those scoundrels," yelled old Roby; and his son jumped on a horse bareback and galloped after them. He overhauled the pair and brought them back. "Bring them up in the loft," ordered the old gentleman. They were lugged up, locked up, and as I afterward learned kept in there for two days on bread and water. Roby's method of discipline was high-handed but effective.

A WONDERFUL BLUFF.

"I rode up to the tavern and gave my horse to a hostler with a great swagger and very emphatic language about taking care of the animal. In the tavern the proprietor, Lloyd, stood behind the bar, a stout, sulky fellow, who had little or nothing to say. As turned out afterward he was the only man in Surrattsville who knew anything about the flight of Booth, who had stopped at the tavern with Herold on Friday night, when Lloyd handed them the whisky and carbines that had been left there by Mrs. Surratt. I began to talk with the crowd of about ten countrymen, and asked them to have a drink. They hung back, and seemed afraid to be seen talking with a stranger, which was natural just then. Finally one of them said, 'We'd kinder like to know who you are, if you ain't got no objections.' 'Have you intelligence enough to know who I am if I tell you?' I asked, with a bold front

and an ugly look at the chap at the hold of his collar and pulled his ear down to my face, and shouted in his ear, 'McGraw!' 'McGraw!' 'My name is McGraw. Did you ever hear of McGraw?' Apparently none of them had, for they stood silent for a moment until a long-haired old fellow slipped up to my side and whispered, 'I've heard of you. He's one of God's people, boys, and a good one. He's all right.' They then drank with me.

The crowd warmed up at this recommendation and I took a bottle of whisky in the next room and set up drinks a couple of times all around to get their tongues wagging, if they had anything to tell.

"I've run this blockade fifty times, but Washington got too hot for me when they shot Lincoln, and I'm going through to the river to-night. My skin isn't safe around Washington. I know this whole country like a book, every swamp and hole in it, and if you'll give me those men I'll put 'em where no blasted Yankees will ever find them."

"The crowd was with me now after my speech and what the old man had told them about McGraw and they scattered, took their horses, and rode out through the neighborhood to see if any trace could be found of the fugitives and to put them under my guidance, to be gotten over the Potomac. While they were away I ate supper, for, although I had already eaten at Roby's, I had to have an object for stopping at the tavern. The colored girl who waited on me was bright and talkative, and I asked her if any officers had been around looking for Booth.

She said that two men had called the day before who told her they were buying cattle. "But when dey wuz eatin' one of 'em threw his coat back an' I seen a badge on his vest. Some of Booth's letters was in the house, an' I was scared dey'd find 'em, so I put 'em in de kitchen fire and fried de eggs de men had foah dinner wid 'em. Heel hee! dey didn't fool me.' I told her she was a clever girl and that she could tell a detective as far as she could see him.

A NARROW SHAVE.

Smoot, my guide, was watched while in the tavern, and he was losing his nerve. He drank to the Southern cause, however, and did nothing to give me away. When I started to leave in the evening after failing to find any clues several men came out to see me off. One of them held a lantern and I saw in a flash that I was in a tight hole and must work quick or risk my skin. I had forgotten the brand on my horse and stamp on saddle and bridle. I turned to them and said:—

"Look here, my boys, have I got any nerve?—see that 'U. S.' on my horse and saddle?—'U. S.' all over him. I stole him from under the nose of the quartermaster in Washington. There wasn't time to buy him. And I'm riding away to Dixie on Uncle Sam's property. When any one gets ahead of McGraw let me know. Here's for the Stars and Bars and Richmond, good-by,' and off I went. But the cold sweat was on my forehead. Smoot, the guide, had enough after this close shave. "I wouldn't ride with you for $10,000, Captain," he said, and left me to go to his home that night.

It was the idea of the boys, and they gave it to me confidentially, at Surrattville, that the fugitives had taken the eastern route through Long-Oldfields, Upper Marlboro, to Dr. Mudd's and Bryantown, and I at once decided to get there if possible. After talking and drinking awaiting the return of the four men sent out until 2 A. M., and three of them having returned with no information, I concluded to make a break. So ordering up my horse I started in the direction of the Potomac. Of course, to mislead them and to prevent them from following me, saying I would be likely to meet the fugitives on the other side, and also that I would give the horse and supplements to the fellow who took me over the river.

I had an idea that Booth had gone toward Marlborough, so, after starting out west in the direction of the Potomac, I turned and rode toward Marlborough, which is a short distance off the road from Surrattsville to Bryantown. I had no sleep that night, reaching Marlborough in the morning where Smoot, the guide, came back and met me, after my detour. He was badly scared and told me some very unpleasant news.

"They're after you. They think you're in the plot and there's the deuce to pay. You're McGraw, and the soldiers are after your hellity-lamp. You'll be shot if you're caught."

THE PURSUER PURSUED.

"The startling tale was too true, and my disguise had worked entirely too well. As I soon found out that gray coat had been responsible. I had not noticed that there was a blood stain on one of the sleeves, but one of the men in Surrat's tavern had seen it. When the crowd had gone out to look for traces of Booth this man had ridden hard all the way to Washington in the night, and had sought General Auger. He told him that I was the man who had stabbed Secretary Seward, as there was blood on my clothes, and that I was a well-known Rebel blockade-runner and spy. The informer was after the reward and he had a strong case. General Augur at once sent out seventy-five cavalrymen with orders to hunt down McGraw who was strongly suspected of being Secretary Seward's would-be assassin."

"Smoot left me now soon for good and all. I was in a nice fix. Nothing located or found out about Booth, and a squad of cavalry after me as the desperate villain McGraw. I got breakfast, had my horse fed, and rode on toward Bryantown, with the intention of stopping at the house of Dr. Mudd, whom I had heard of as a prominent and active Southern sympathizer. The people at Surrattsville thought that Booth and his companion had gone that way.

"I reached Dr. Mudd's at 10 o'clock on Monday morning and found Mrs. Mudd sitting on the front steps with two children. I asked for the doctor and found that he had gone to Bryantown. I saw a likely-looking darky near the house, asked him to water my horse as a pretext to talk with him. When we were behind the house I said: 'You look like a man who would tell the truth,' and slipped him a $5 gold piece. 'Have you seen any strangers around here lately?'

"'Foh Gawd, you won't tell anybody?' said he, 'promise me dat?' I reassured him and he whispered: 'There was two men here yesterday, a tall an' a short man. I made a crutch for one of 'em. They cut his boot off, an' he cut off his mustache. They came out an' the doctor took dem cross in the swamp.'

THE FIRST TRACE OF BOOTH.

"This was the first trace of Booth that had been found. Detectives were working their way up to Canada as well as everywhere toward the South. I had found his trail and knew that I could not be far behind him. From the time when Booth left Ford's Theatre, on Friday night, he had completely disappeared, until my conversation with the negro at Dr. Mudd's. I rode down to Bryantown to look for Dr. Mudd and had a talk with him, but said nothing to him about Booth. I knew enough and could lay my hands on Dr. Mudd whenever I wanted him. Then I headed for the Tzekiak Swamp and went through the head of it, making inquiries without result. I struggled back toward the village of "T. B." and went up the road beyond the town, where I met a detective with black whiskers, one of Baker's men, whom I knew. 'Those men are right in this locality. I'm right on them, and we'll bag them together,' said I.

"He didn't seem very joyful, and burst out, 'Well, I've had an awful time. The whole county is full of wild cavalrymen shooting at everything they see. They'll shoot a man at a mile. My black whiskers was the only thing that saved me. The lunatics are flying around with sabers flying and the air full of bullets. They're after a man named McGraw."

"'Well, that's funny," said I, "who the devil is McGraw. Have you got anything with you?"

"A pair of handcuffs and a pistol," said he.

"Put the cuffs on me. The jig's up. I'm McGraw. Handcuff me and take me to Washington and in order to draw off the cavalry."

"The Black Whiskers was dumfounded and perplexed. I wouldn't go through Surrattsville with you for $10,000,' said he."

"The thing must be done and that's the end of it." He put the cuffs on me at last, and we started back on a road that led around Surrattsville. I took the cuffs off when no one was in sight, and was looked on as a rebel patriot by the people we met. We came to a house over which the rebel flag was flying. A woman came out and said: "You're one of our own people. We won't let him take you out of town." I told her it was all right, that the Yankees weren't smart enough to hold me, and persuaded her to call off the crowd of friends that was pressing round my captor. We were taken in and fed, I cheered the "bonnie blue flag" and we kept on to Washington and to General Augur's office.

"He came in and said. 'I hardly expected to see you so soon, Captain Franklin.'

"'I hardly expected it myself,' said I, 'but circumstances alter cases.'

"'Have you met with any success?'

"'I got track of the men at Dr. Mudd's,' I said. 'and told him of my discovery, and that I came back to "T. B.," when I suddenly found it necessary to report to him.'

"'Did you hear of a man down there named McGraw who is said to be one of the assassins,' asked the general.

"'I believe I did. Have you a description of him?'

AN UNFORTUNATE DOUBLE.

"The general tapped a bell and got a description from the adjutant general, brought from Surrattsville—blood on gray coat sleeve, red side whiskers. I looked down and saw the blood on my coat for the first time, and understood the situation. I stood up and asked: 'Do you think that looks anything like me?'

"'It's the very image of you,' said General Augur.

"'Well, I'm McGraw. The blood gave me away.'

"'Why we sent seventy-five cavalrymen to catch you.'

"'Call them back,' I said. 'We know where the two men are, and the soldiers are in the way.'

"'We sent 75 more men down after you last night," said the adjutant general. 'We were satisfied you were the man that cut Secretary Seward's throat.' An orderly was sent off to bring back the McGraw pursuers, and I rested for a few hours, my first sleep since my start two days before. I reported at night, when a chartered steamer filled with detectives was sent down the river and landed at Port Tobacco, on the information which I had secured. The crowd went to Bryantown on the first day and every fellow was going to catch the fugitives at once. They got horses and started out, and all had Dr. Mudd on the brain.

"Ten of them could not ride, and they were so crippled on the second day that they couldn't walk. Some of them put on farmer disguises and the woods were full of amateur detectives with rope bridles and hayseed whiskers.

HOT ON THE TRAIL.

"Detective Tripps, of Alexandria, Va., who was a good rider, worked with me, and we cut loose from the crowd. On the second day Captain Lovett, with the invalid corps, took Dr. Mudd into custody and carried him to Washington. Dr. George Mudd, his cousin, said in my hearing: 'If I thought my cousin was guilty of being in with these men I'd put this knife into his heart.' General Hancock came to Bryantown with 800 men and took charge of the field operations.

"Tripps and I struck out through the swamp to Captain Cox's house, and rode up there through a beautiful front yard, with flower beds running along the fence at the sides. Captain Cox, the elder, came out and extended the hospitality of his place in magnificent style. We were treated royally, and when we told him our story he said: 'Well, well. I will do anything in my power to assist you in catching those villains.' We spent the night at the house.

"On our travels to Cox's we met two colored men, who stopped us and asked if it was true that they had 'done killed Uncle Samuel,' and 'dey was sure no colored man had anything to do with it.' Captain Franklin thinks rather mourn-

"In the morning we went down to the woods and learned that the negro, Swan, had guided Booth and Herald to Captain

Cox's. We found Swan later, and told him that there were no marks of horses' hoofs in the front door yard. 'You ain't smart,' said he, and took us back to the house. He showed us where the fence had been taken down and the horses had come in and stood in the flower beds without leaving a mark in the yard. I called Captain Cox out and asked what men made those horses' tracks. He seemed much surprised, and I arrested him, handcuffed him, and sent him to Bryantown without any delay."

MISSED BY A HAIR.

"We went out on the hunt toward the river, feeling certain that the men were hidden near at hand. On the following day we were about three miles from Allen's Fush in the afternoon, looking around, when we saw a soldier riding down the road covered with dust, his horse all lather and sweat. He pulled an order from General Hancock out of his belt, called me back to Bryantown. I learned afterwards that Herald heard this soldier shout my name from his hiding place in the swamp, so near were we to the assassins."

"On reaching Bryantown General Hancock told me that he had received information that Booth and Herald had been seen in the swamp near Dr. Mudd's that morning. I told him I thought this a ruse to draw our attention, and allow the men to cross the river, and that the men were near the Potomac. I obeyed orders, however, and was given seventy-five cavalry with directions to drive Zekiah swamp fifteen miles to the Potomas. I stretched the men clear across the swamp and went through it in mud and water, until the river was reached, an all day job. We reached the river the night after Booth crossed. He went over the night I was called back to Bryantown. We met some colored people near the river who said that 'the dogs barked powerful hard at somethin' goin' on last night on the road.'

"I found a man named Jones at his house near Papes Creek, and arrested him on suspicion, and took him up to Bryantown. He was very impudent and was the only man in sight that looked like a blockade runner. He turned out to be the man who had guided Booth and Herald to the river the night before and had furnished them a boat. I found one of his blockade running boats, the bateau which had been built for use in the Lincoln abduction plot, and ordered my troopers to smash it.

"When I reached Bryantown again, a telegram had just come to General Hancock with the news that Booth had been shot on the Virginia side. Tupp and I were within 150 yards of them in the swamp, when I was recalled by General Hancock, and I am confident that if we had remained down there that night, as we planned to do, we would have run across the party as they made their way to the Potomac."

"Captain Franklin thinks rather mournfully of what might have been, with rewards of $100,000 out for the capture of Booth and Herald. No one could have come nearer success than he, and his work in finding the trail of the flight was invaluable to the Government. After the war, Captain Franklin was the first man appointed in the Secret Service Bureau of the United States Treasury, and through '65, '66 and '67 he did more in breaking up counterfeiting operations than any other officer before or since his time. He ran down and captured the biggest operators that have ever worked in this country. He has since been engaged in detective work.

CAPTAIN STEPHEN D. FRANKLIN.

