TRUTH ABOUT BOOTH.

Slayer of Lincoln Now Buried in Baltimore.

Three Men Who Identified the Body Are Alive.

Two Tell Their Stories, and Remove All Doubt.

[From Our Special Correspondent.]

BALTIMORE, Md., March 7, 1903.



INCE the recent publication in The Boston Herald of the confession of Samuel Bland Arnold, one of the original conspirators in the plot to kidnap President Lincoln that culminated in his assassination, more or less discussion has been precipitated concerning the death of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Lincoln, and the disposition of the body of that misguided genius.

Stories have been circulated of how Booth escaped the vigilance of the federal troops, after his flight from Washington; how he reached Nassau, England, South America and other countries, there to live in seclusion for as many years as the enterprising romancer deemed proper to elect.

Following these came the more recent revelation from Guthrie, Ok., that Daniel E. George, who committed suicide in Enid on Feb. 12, made a confession before his death that he was really John Wilkes Booth, and that he had slain President Lincoln. The story related by George on his deathbed was a remarkable narrative, but it can be stated on the best of authority that the man was laboring under a delusion, and that his tale was nothing short of a myth.

After the assassination of President Lincoln, in Ford's Theatre in Washington, on the night of April 14, 1865, Booth and his companion, David E. Herold, succeeded in escaping from the capital. They were traced through the counties of Prince George's, Charles and St. Mary's, Maryland, and finally across the Potomac river, in King George and Caroline counties, in Virginia. Booth and Herold subsequently succeeded in crossing the Rappahannock at Port Conway and had advanced some distance toward Bowling Green. By the aid of information obtained from negroes, and from a rebel paroled prisoner, they were finally found in a barn on a Mr. Garrett's place, early in the morning of the 26th of April, when Herold surrendered. Booth, defiant to the last, was shot by Sergt. Boston Corbett, of the cavalry force in pursuit of the fugitives, and lived but a few hours, ending his life in agony.

Booth's body was immediately conveyed to Washington, and at the order of the government, secretly buried in the old arsenal at the foot of Four-and-a-Half street, in the capital. It will be remembered that it was in the old arsenal the bodies of Atzerodt, Payne and Mrs. Surratt were interred after the execution for the part they were convicted of playing in the plot that led to the slaying of Lincoln. At intervals newspapers have stated that the body of Booth was removed from the old arsenal, and, by direction of the government, sunk in the Potomac river.

The truth of the matter is that Edwin Booth, the eminent actor and brother of John Wilkes Booth, after persistent efforts succeeded in getting permission from President Andrew Johnson for the removal of the body of his brother from the old arsenal to Baltimore for final interment. Today the body of John Wilkes Booth rests in the Booth lot in Greenmount cemetery in this city, and there are living several reputable citizens who saw the body before the casket was finally closed, identified the remains as those of John Wilkes Booth and witnessed the final interment.

When Booth's body was brought from Washington to Baltimore it was taken to the undertaking establishment of John A. Weaver, on Fayette street, near Holliday street, and within sight of the famous old Holliday Street Theatre, in which John Wilkes Booth made his last public appearance in this city as an actor.

Gathered in the undertaking establishment were John T. Ford, the manager of the Opera House; Charles B. Bishop, the comedian; Basil Moxley, the veteran doorkeeper at Ford's Opera House; Henry W. Mears, who succeeded Mr. Weaver in the undertaking business; Joseph T. Lowry, a local photographer, and last, but not least, Edwin Booth, who had requested the gentlemen to assemble for the purpose of identifying the dead and bearing witness to that fact for the satisfaction of his mother This identification was thorough and complete, Edwin Booth remaining in an adjoining room while the face of the dead was exposed to view.

Of that little party assembled in Weaver's establishment, but three are living—Messrs. Mears, Lowry and Moxley, the latter being averse to talk of the part he played as a witness in the affair. Mr. Mears' account of the happening is as follows:

"At the close of President Johnson's administration he granted a permit for the removal of the assassin's body from Washington. John A. Weaver removed the body to the same building I am now occupying, and, despite the fact that it had been interred nearly four years, it was in a fairly good state of preservation. Prior to that time the Booth lot was in Baltimore cemetery; then they secured the one in Greenmount cemetery, where most of the illustrious family now sleep. Junius Brutus Booth and his wife, Mary Ann Booth, rest there. Since their interment other members of the family have been buried there. Dr. Joseph Booth of New York city, being the last.

"I saw the body of John Wilkes Booth lowered into its grave, and for many years have had charge of the lot. While Edwin Booth was alive he evinced a desire to beautify the family lot at Greenmount, and sent for me to arrange the details. Each grave was discussed, and when that of John Wilkes Booth attracted his attention he turned to me and said: 'Let it remain as it is—unmarked.'"

Mr. Lowry's version of the affair is as follows:

"I was in the undertaking establishment of Mr. Weaver when the body of Booth was received from Washington. I had seen Booth play 20 times at the Holliday Street Theatre, and knew him well by sight. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that the face of the dead man I looked upon was that of th actor, whom I had seen many times in life. The features were the same, although considerably sunken. His dark hair, which was remarkably thick and curly, was well preserved."

As further evidence that the body of John Wilkes Booth rests in Greenmount cemetery is the original permit in the cemetery records, dated Feb. 18, 1869, issued to John A. Weaver, undertaker.

In addition to this, Samuel Bland Arnold, one of the Lincoln conspirators, who knows as much about Booth as any other living man, recently stated at his home in Friendship, Anne Arundel county, Maryland, that he knew it to be a fact that Booth was shot in Virginia, as already described, and that his body now rests in Greenmount cemetery.

Baltimore was the chief stage upon which Booth played his romantic part, and there are many residents of the Monumental City who treasure reminiscences of that misguided genius. But none of them so far as general interest is concerned, can compare with those of Edwin M. Olfriend of Richmond, Va., who recently said:

"Edwin Booth once said to me: 'John Wilkes had the genius of my father, and was far more gifted than I.' In Richmond the man who assassinated Lincoln played under the name of John Wilkes, and never used his own name until his brother Edwin came to the city to play 'Hamlet.' He then played Horatio to his brother's Hamlet, and his name was given in the bills as John Wilkes Booth.

"It is an interesting fact that Edwin Booth never desisted from his patient and quiet endeavor to recover the body of John Wilkes Booth, until he delivered it through friends to his mother in Maryland. Of John Wilkes Booth's death there can be no doubt. John T. Ford, the Baltimore theatrical manager, and Charles B. Bishop, the comedian, both told me that they witnessed for Edwin Booth the exhuming of the body, identified it and sent it to his mother. This should set at rest the persistent rumor that he is still alive."