WILKES BOOTH'S DEATH.

DESCRIBED BY A WOMAN WHO WAS WITH HIM AT THE LAST.

Miss L. H. B. Holloway, One of the Garrett Household, in Which the Assassin Sought Refuge, Tells of His Life in His Last Asylum, His Plan to Flee, and His Capture.

The war had been over for several weeks. A number of days had passed since the tragedy in Washington had been enacted. The perpetrator had made good his escape from the capital, and his place of refuge was unknown. But as yet the intelligence of the calamity had failed to reach a large portion of eastern Virginia.

Such was the condition of affairs when, on Monday, April 24, 1865, at about noon, a boat containing five men crossed over from Port Conway to Port Royal, Va., two villages on the banks of the Rappahannock, opposite each other. Three of the men proved to be the ferrymen, William Rollins, Mr. Green, and a negro, Richard Wilson, but the others were strangers.

Upon landing one of the strangers inquired of the bystanders for a Confederate officer. No sooner was his inquiry made known than young William Jett, dressed in a Confederate Captain's uniform, introduced himself as Capt. Jett of Mosby's command. Thereupon the stranger engaged him in close conversation for several minutes, after which, being joined by his companion, he said to him in the presence of the pretended officer:

"I have told this officer who we are and what we have done." To this his companion replied: "I didn't intend to tell any one that."

The three men conversed quite earnestly for some time, after which, young Jett leading the way, they left the village in company with two Confederate officers, Lieuts. Bainbridge and Ruggles, following the road leading in the direction of Bowling Green, which is a small Court House town in Carolina county.

They had not proceeded more than three miles when they stopped at the outer gate of a private road leading to a large, frame prison house, a short distance from the main road. Here one of the unknown men—the one who inquired for the officer at Port Royal, was left, while the others rode on to the house.

On arriving they were met by Richard H. Garrett, who was the owner of the house. Jett addressed him: "This is Mr. Garrett, I presume." On receiving an affirmative answer, he introduced to him the second stranger as his friend, John William Boyd, "a Confederate soldier who had been wounded in the battles around Richmond near Petersburg," at the same time requesting Mr. Garrett to take care of him until Wednesday morning, at which time he would call for him. Mr. Garrett consented to receive the so-called friend and to entertain him. It was now about 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Nothing of consequence occurred until Tuesday at dinner time, when Jack Garrett, the eldest son, returned from Port Royal bearing the news of President Lincoln's death. The tragic affair was commented upon by all present, each expressing his opinion as to the motive which prompted the deed and its effects upon the public welfare.

Boyd remained silent at first, but on hearing one of the daughters remark that she supposed the perpetrator had been well paid he turned to her with a smile and said: "Do you think so, miss? By whom do you suppose he was paid?"

"Oh," replied she, "I suppose by both the North and South."

"It is my opinion," rejoined he, "he wasn't paid a cent, but did it for notoriety's sake."

Soon after they arose from the table, and as he started out Mrs. Garrett (my sister) asked if he would like to have his wound dressed. He replied that it did not give him the slightest pain or trouble, then thanked her, and with several others went out upon the front porch, commanding a full view of the public road, and sat down upon the steps. They had been sitting there for some time when Bainbridge, Jett, and Herold rode up to the gate. Herold was seen to dismount from behind Jett and begin walking toward the house, while Bainbridge and Jett rode on. It was then that Boyd asked Jack Garrett to go upstairs and get his revolver. When asked why he wanted it he said he always felt safer when armed. Then he was asked who was approaching, to which he replied: "Oh, that is one of our men."

"What do you mean?" asked Jack.

"Why, one of those who crossed over with us," he said, and walking off he met Herold about midway between the gate and the house, where they remained in close conversation for fully half an hour, after which they both came to the house.

Not long afterward Jett and Bainbridge rode up hurriedly to the house to see, as Jett professed, how his friend Boyd was getting along, at the same telling him that he and Herold had better make good their escape, for he understood that the Federal troops were crossing over from Port Conway to Port Royal; then he galloped off, Jett going in the direction of Port Royal to meet, as it is conjectured, the troops who were coming in answer to his summons.

About an hour before sundown the Federal troops were seen dashing along the road in the direction of Bowling Green. While they were passing, Boyd and Herold hid themselves in the thickets, which were some distance from the house, and did not emerge until after the soldiers had passed. Upon being asked why they, ex-Confederate soldiers, should hide themselves, now that the war was over, Boyd replied that he did not care about meeting any of them.

Failing to comprehend the action of these two men, Jack Garrett resolved to institute some investigation. Upon inquiry he learned that the Federal troops were in pursuit of two Confederate soldiers, one of whom was wounded, and the descriptions which they gave corresponded exactly with those of the two men at his home. So, returning home, he asked Boyd if they had got into any trouble, saying: "You know what you have done. Now, if you have got into any difficulty, you must leave at once, for I do not want you to bring any trouble upon my aged father." To which Boyd replied that they had had a little brush over in Maryland, but it was all over.

In the evening, as they were sitting on the porch, Boyd asked Jack Garrett to take him up to Guiney's station that night, offering him $10. When asked why he wanted to go there he said that he had heard there was a Confederate Maryland battery near Louisa Court House which hadn't disbanded, and if he could reach that he would be safe. Jack told him that he could not take him that evening, but would do so the next morning, giving as his reason that he had only one horse. Boyd agreed to this and gave him the $10 in advance.

When the hour had arrived to retire, Boyd asked Jack if there was an out-house in which he could sleep that night, in order that he need not go upstairs. On being asked why he wished to sleep out, he replied: "I had rather not go upstairs." On being told that there was no place in which he could be made comfortable, he replied that any place would do. Then he and Herold were conducted to a large tobacco house, in which was stored a lot of valuable furniture belonging to the people of Port Royal, covered with hay and other provender. After they had entered Jack Garrett locked the door and took the key to the house and gave it to me, saying that he would leave it in my care and that I must not let any one have it, as it was his opinion they intended trying to steal the horses and escape. Then, arming themselves, he and his brother Willie went out into a shed opposite the tobacco house to spend the night.

About 2 o'clock the next morning (Wednesday) the family was aroused from sleep by the loud barking of dogs, the clanking of arms, and the heavy tread of sentinels pacing up and down the porch. Soon it was discovered that a sentinel had been placed at every door and window and that the whole yard was full of soldiers. All at once there was heard a rush for the porch at the end of the house, followed by a violent battering against the door, with demands that it be opened.

Hearing the racket Mr. Garrett arose, partially dressed himself, and hastened to the door to inquire the cause of the tumult. Instantly he was seized and asked what he meant by harboring Booth, the murderer of the President; upon which, notwithstanding the entreaties of his wife and little two-year-old daughter, he was taken by force from the house, half-clad, and threatened with handcuffs and the rope, and a pistol was placed to his breast. Then he was carried into the yard and set upon a block, where he remained until 8 o'clock in the morning with two soldiers guarding him, thereby contracting a severe cold from which he never recovered. Again and again he was importuned, with threats of hanging, to disclose the whereabout of Booth, the murderer of the President. Again and again did he profess his ignorance.

At length Mr. Garrett learned that Lieut Dougherty, with thirty or forty men, accompanied by Col. Congor and Lieut. Baker, the detectives, and Waters, a New York reporter, had come to arrest Booth. Then it dawned upon him that this Boyd must be Booth, and also that these men must have been directed thither by Jett, who, when brought forward in the morning and accused by Mr. Garrett of piloting the soldiers there and of bringing that trouble upon him, made no reply, but hung his head.

At this juncture of affairs Jack Garrett came up from the shed, and, perceiving his father's perplexity, said: "Gentlemen, if you want to know where those men are I will take you to the place. They didn't sleep in the house tonight, but in an outhouse."

At once they compelled him to pile light wood around the building. Then he was sent in after Booth, who warned him not to come in again, and said to those without: "Gentlemen, who are you and what did you come for?"

They said: "We want you; we came for you."

Booth answered: "Then prepare a stretcher, for I will never surrender."

Jack Garrett said: "There are nearly fifty armed men and escape is utterly impossible. Act like a man and surrender."

Booth rejoined: "Surrender? I have never learned the meaning of that word. There is one here, however, who will surrender."

Then Jack Garrett was sent in after Herold, who was brought out and placed under guard. The light wood being set on fire, Booth called out: "Now I can pick off eighteen of you before I stop, but I have accomplished all I want to."

At once the fire was put out. Again Booth cried out: "Give me fifteen steps and I will make good my escape."

The rejoinder was: "No, we will not give any."

"Give me ten," said he, "and I will escape."

This was refused. "Give me five," he said.

"No, we will not give you any."

Then Booth said: "I want you to take notice of one thing; the gentleman with whom I am stopping knows not who I am or what I have done."

After this a lighted torch was thrown into the barn, which soon set on fire the hay and other combustibles, making a great conflagration. Then, taking advantage of the light within and the darkness without, Sergeant Corbett thrust his revolver through a crack and shot at Booth, the ball passing through the jugular vein and taking in one of the cervical vertebræ.

As soon as it was discovered that Booth had been shot, Jack Garrett was sent in to bring him out. Booth was carried to the house by four men and laid upon the front porch.

At once a mattress upon which to place him was asked for. But he said: "No, no. Let me lie here. Let me die here."

Then one of the officers ejaculated: "The —— rebel is still living;" and immediately despatched a message for Dr. Urquehart of Port Royal. A pillow was asked for and I brought it, and while Lieut. Baker held him up I placed it under his head. Wine was offered him, but he refused it. Then water was presented, but he would not drink it.

Presently he protruded his tongue. I took my handkerchief and dipped it in water and moistened his lips. He said: "Tell my mother I died for my country. I did what I thought to be best." I again moistened his lips, and he repeated the message to his mother. Soon he gasped. I moistened his lips and tongue a third time, and the pulsation in his temples grew weaker and weaker. It was then that Lieut. Baker asked me to rub his forehead and temple. I did so. The end was near. Gasping three times and crossing his hands upon his breast Booth died just as the day was breaking and the doctor was reaching the house.

About 8 o'clock that morning the body of Booth was sewed up in a United States blanket belonging to Lieut. Baker, and, together with Herold and the two Garrett boys, was conveyed to Washington. After all had gone and the family had become a little more composed I went to the bookcase to get some books for the children, as I was teaching school in the family at the time. The first thing that greeted my eyes was a pair of opera glasses. I knew they did not belong to any of the family. I concluded they must be Booth's, so I took them to Mr. Garrett and asked him what I should do with them. He replied: "Take them out of my sight. I do not want to see anything that will remind me of this dreadful affair."

I told him that I would send them up to my mother in a day or two. I then took a pin and marked "J. W. B." under the buckle on the strap. During the day my brother came to Mr. Garrett's and I sent them to my mother by him, thinking they were too valuable to be destroyed.

The next evening Lieut. Baker, in company with Jack Garrett, came to Mr. Garrett's in quest of the glasses. They did not really know they were there, but simply supposed Booth had them and thought they might be there. Lieut. Baker asked Mr. Garrett if they were not there, and without any hesitation he told him that I had them. He then came to me and asked where they were; I very reluctantly told him. Lieut. Baker and Jack Garrett went up to my mother's, about eight miles away, and got them. They came back to Mr. Garrett's about 4 o'clock in the evening, spent the night, and returned to Washington the next day.

L. H. B. HOLLOWAY.