

BOSTON CORBETT NOT DEAD?

The Slayer of Wilkes Booth Said to Be Selling Patent Medicines in the South.

From the Topeka Daily Capital.

When Boston Corbett, the slayer of John Wilkes Booth, escaped from the Topeka insane asylum in 1888, he was marked "dead" on the records of the institution and legally if not literally, passed out of existence. The conclusion on the part of the asylum officials that Corbett was dead was accepted by the public without question. The newspapers commented briefly upon his mysterious disappearance, and Kansas speedily forgot the eccentric character who was the active instrument in avenging the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

And now, after thirteen years, Corbett has been resurrected. For more than four years past he has been a travelling salesman for W. W. Gavitt & Co., who conduct a proprietary medicine concern in Topeka. Both his employers and his guardian have in recent times used every effort to induce Corbett to return to Kansas. He has property interests in Cloud county, and the Government owes him over \$1,300 back pension, not a cent of which he will ever be able to draw until the fact that he is alive is established by his own affidavit to that effect. It has been represented to him that his sanity will be easily established and his release from the asylum legally secured, but Corbett is wily and suspicious, and refuses to set foot on Kansas soil. He lives in and travels through Oklahoma and Texas, and for a long time had headquarters at Enid, where he owns some property. George A. Huron, of Topeka is his guardian. He wrote Huron some weeks ago that he never expected to return to Kansas, and that the Government was welcome to his pension money.

Corbett is now 62 years old. He was always peculiar. From the time he enlisted in the army the trend of his mental idiosyncrasy was toward religious fanaticism. He was intensely religious, and was always considered dangerous by his neighbors in Cloud county. Corbett never married, and up to the time he was sent to the asylum lived alone in a shack on his claim in Cloud county. He always went armed and his shack was fortified and equipped with every brand of "shooting iron" known to the Western trade. He labored under the delusion that members of the Booth family were following him with the intent to murder him, and it was almost worth a stranger's life to set foot on his claim, or to walk across the street directly toward him.

Corbett was sent to the asylum as the direct result of cleaning out the House of Representatives of the Kansas Legislature during the session of 1878. He was serving at assistant sergeant-at-arms of the House and had charge of the ladies' gallery. One morning shortly after rollcall he appeared in the gallery with a revolver in his hand. He began shouting and gesticulating and the House immediately adjourned without delay, some of the members crawling under the seats and others bolting through the doors and into the committee rooms. A detail of police was called, and, after some manœuvring, Corbett was surrounded and captured. His trial on the charge of insanity followed. He was given considerable freedom at the institution and was allowed to circulate at liberty about the grounds. One day the son of Supt. Eastman rode out on horseback from Topeka to the asylum. Corbett was observed shortly after standing near the horse, but no especial notice was taken of him. A little later an attendant saw him mount the animal and disappear down the road, turning the wind as he went.

The officials and attendants who chased him never caught sight of him afterward. Three weeks later Supt. Eastman received a letter stating that the horse was at Nevada awaiting his orders. Corbett was reported as having gone to Mexico, from which country apparently reliable news of his death came back to the Kansas officials.

The slayer of John Wilkes Booth served during the war in a Massachusetts regiment, enlisting at Boston. He was a hatter by trade. His real name was John Corbett, but a year or two before the war he was converted at a big revival meeting in Boston, and to commemorate the event took the name of the town in which it occurred. The winter he spent in Topeka he was the loudest shouter at the Salvation Army meetings, and never failed to take part in the street exhibitions of the organization. For some years after he left the asylum he travelled under the name of John Corbett. Recently he has again assumed the name of Boston. He worked for the Gavitts a long time before they associated him with the man who shot Booth. Finally they suspected his identity, and he acknowledged that he was Boston Corbett in a letter written to the firm some months since. W. W. Gavitt says he is an excellent salesman, and that he has always made money for himself and the firm. Many Texas towns bar patent medicine pedlers by ordinance, but Corbett pays no attention to ordinances, and has worked practically every town in Texas without having been molested.

Corbett's farm is about eighteen miles from Concordia, in Cloud county. He owns eighty acres of land, only about eighteen acres of which is fit for cultivation. The returns from the farm are seldom more than sufficient to pay the taxes. When Corbett was committed to the asylum an effort was made to secure a guardian in Cloud county, but his neighbors were all afraid of him and refused to take the job. George A. Huron was then appointed and has since looked after his interests. Corbett drew a pension of \$8 a month. Following the Government custom his name was stricken from the rolls of the pension office after he had been missing three years, but if he were restored to citizenship he would be reinstated and the Government would owe him in the neighborhood of \$1,300.

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