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LETTER FROM BOSTON CORBETT.

HOW AND WHY J. WILKES BOOTH WAS KILLED

Sergeant Boston Corbett, the soldier who shot Booth, has written to a friend in New York the following interesting account of the pursuit and death of the assassin; it has been handed to us for publication, and will be read with interest as a characteristic production:-

CORBETT'S STATEMENT.

"On the afternoon of Monday, April 24, the bugle-call sounded 'boot and saddle', in answer to which we saddled up, and under command of Lieutenant E. P. Doherty, twenty-six of us started off for Colonel Baker's headquarters. After we had received his orders we moved down to the Sixth street wharf, embarking on the United States steamtug John S Ida, on our way to Belle Plain. On landing there we proceeded towards Fredericksburg. After going a few miles in that direction, about midnight we turned off towards the Rappahannock. At another point on our way houses were searched and persons questioned, in order to obtain some information concerning the fugitives from justice whom we were hunting.

"In the afternoon of the next day we reached Port Conway, on the Rappahannock river, opposite Port Royal. We were ferried across in a large scow; eight men with their horses being taken over each time. When all were over, we formed and rode into Port Royal. Advancing without delay, we immediately saw Rebel troopers on the neighboring hills, who fled as we approached them. Not knowing that Booth was hidden on the Garrett farm, we passed it, but having information that Captain Jett (Rebel), who had assisted Booth so far, was in Bowling Green, we aimed direct for that place, where we secured him, and threatened to shoot him if he did not lead us to Booth's hiding-place.

"After taking us back to Garrett's farm the column was halted, and Lieutenant Doherty came riding up to me to say that Booth was in the house, which, through the darkness, I could but imperfectly distinguish. He ordered me to deploy the men right and left, so that the house might be completely surrounded. This done, Lieutenant Doherty, accompanied by the two detectives who were with him, aroused the inmates, demanding to speak with the men who were secreted in the house, as we then thought. Mr. Garrett not being in much of a hurry in answering, a rope was called for, when he told us the two men were out in the barn. The house being left guarded, the rest of us were thrown around the barn, closely investing it.

"Garrett was sent in to demand their surrender, when Booth told him that he had betrayed them, and that he would shoot him, when he (Garrett) hastily returned. Their surrender was then demanded by the Lieutenant, he telling them at the same time that five minutes would be given them, after which time the barn would be fired. Booth, in his deep-toned voice, called to us:- "Whom do you take me for? and what will be done with me if I should surrender?" In reply to these questions he was answered that they would be taken prisoners.

"Booth said, "What have I done? No man is called to prove his innocence until some charge is made against him." We told him that he would have ample opportunity of proving his innocence, but that he would have to surrender, as all avenues of escape were closed. From his subsequent remarks we could judge that he was determined not to be taken alive. Harold was heard whispering to him, no doubt trying to persuade him to surrender, when of a sudden the latter said:- 'Cap, here is a man who wishes mighty badly to surrender.' After some more words had passed between the two, Booth, in order to clear his companion as far as his own guilty word would go, called out loudly, so that it might be distinctly heard outside:- ' I declare before my Maker that this man is innocent of any crime whatsoever.' I could not help but pray at that moment that if it were possible God would have mercy upon him and save his soul from the eternal fire. For it was plainly evident that he had but a few minutes to live.

"Through an opening in the boards, Mr. Conger, one of the detectives, set fire to the hay, at once enveloping the building in a sheet of flame. Booth was now in the centre of the barn, but turned towards the fire, either to put it out or to shoot the person who had applied it. But finding it spreading so rapidly, he turned from it. While he approached the fire he also came near to me, as I was on that side; but still I held my fire, as long as it did not seem necessary to shoot him. My eye was steadily fixed upon him. When near the door through which Harold had come out, I saw a movement on his part which I did not await, as I felt confident that he would shoot some one of our men if he was not disabled. My fire went through a crack in the boards and shot him through the neck or back part of the head, behind the ears; the pistol-ball went right through it.

"He was carried out on the porch of the house and made as comfortable as circumstances would permit, but it was evident that the wound was mortal. A doctor having been sent for ordered stimulants, but as he was not able to take them by the mouthful a rag

was soaked, which he sucked when placed in his mouth. He was unable to speak, and all I heard was an outcry when shot. Those who watched him more closely than I did say that he spoke the words which the papers gave at the time, but I did not hear them personally.

" Before firing upon him I had offered to enter the barn and take him, because I felt confident that it would be less dangerous to go in and fight him than stand at a large crack in the boards where he could distinctly see me, in the approaching dawn, when it was dark in the barn and I could not see him. I was not allowed to go, and when all was over I had the feeling that it was all for the best. I had the consciousness of having discharged a solemn yet painful duty, and when I saw where Booth was shot -- nearly in the same place where he had hit the President -- I could clearly discern the ways of the Lord.

"When first called upon to surrender, he was told that if he did not do so in five minutes the barn would be fired; but although the time was extended much over the time allowed, he did not give in, but stood firm to the last. He declared that he was the only man in the barn, and that the key was broken; but afterwards spoke of the other man as being with him.

"When Harold spoke of Booth he called him Boyd, and told us that he had first met him but three days before. Nevertheless, on our way to Washington, he spoke of Booth by his real name. Booth died between two and three hours after he was shot, at 7 o'clock A.M. on the 26th day of April, 1865. We took the body and prisoner to Belle Plain, where the same little tug was in waiting to convey us back to Washington. Captain Henry Wilson was in command of the boat. About midnight, on our arrival opposite Washington, Colonel Baker took the boat in charge and ordered us to the Navy Yard, where our prisoner was put on a monitor, after which we returned to our quarters. On our way thither we stopped at the Soldiers' Rest, where we were efficiently furnished with food at that early hour. The gray dawn of the coming day faintly lit up the scene as we unharnessed our weary beasts.

"Our force numbered, entire, one commissioned officer, two detectives, and twenty-six enlisted men. Yours, etc,

Boston Corbett

"Sergeant Co. L, 16th New York Cavalry.