

David E. George as J. Wilkes Booth

House Painter Who Posed as Lincoln's Assassin—Sixth Article

By F. L. BLACK

A MAN known as David E. George asserted at El Reno, Oklahoma, in April, 1900, that he was John Wilkes Booth. This time a woman was the recipient of the "confession." As it created an awkward situation for Finis L. Bates, chief author of the Booth myth, to have a David E. George make the same claim that John St. Helen had made, and as it was obvious that if one of them was Lincoln's assassin, the other could not be, Mr. Bates simply disposed of the difficulty by asserting that John St. Helen and David E. George were one and the same individual, and that individual was Booth. Thus the myth was apparently lifted over a fatal danger point. Mr. Bates simply says that St. Helen dropped out of sight at Fort Worth for a number of years, and was rediscovered again at Hennessey and El Reno, in Oklahoma, as George. If St. Helen were George, the same general characteristics would be evident, the same man would appear. With this in mind, the investigation was pursued in Hennessey, El Reno, and Enid, and because the reports received in these places would involve some repetition, only the El Reno and Enid phases will be presented at length. It was at Enid that David E. George's sordid life ended in suicide.

Bates located David George at Hennessey, Oklahoma, in 1899, under the name of George D. Ryan. This, however, is a needless attempt to increase the sense of mystery. George lived in Hennessey under his own name of George, and earned his living as a house painter. He was a drunkard and a morphine addict. It is during this Hennessey period that Bates begins to weave another web of mystery around the remittances which he says George received from the outside world. These "mysterious remittances" were used to establish the idea that "Booth's" relatives were secretly supplying him with funds. But the postmaster and paint merchant in sworn statements declare, the one that George never received remittances, and the other that George could scarcely meet his paint bills. Bates also has George purchasing a "\$3,500 cottage" at El Reno. The records at the courthouse show that on February 25, 1902, George paid John J. Davis \$350 and gave a mortgage for \$350—making only \$700 in all—for a small place in El Reno, which he sold again on July 3, 1902. But of this "mystery money" we shall hear more.

The George angle of the Booth myth is made by Mr. Bates to rest largely on the alleged statements of a Mrs. E. C. Harper.

He says, "Mrs. Harper makes the following statement:

"Mr. George (Booth) had been a resident of the Territory for several years. He had always been well supplied with money, the origin or source of which no one knew, for from some mysterious source he received a regular remittance. He was a familiar figure in Guthrie, El Reno, and Enid."

In conversation with Mrs. Harper (who had since become Mrs. Young) January 21, 1921, she denied any knowledge of D. E. George having received remittances from any source, and said that if he was a familiar figure in Guthrie and Enid she was ignorant of it; that she had known him but a few weeks and actually knew him but slightly.

From this point we shall refer to Mrs. Harper by her later name of Young.

Continuing, Mr. Bates claims that Mrs. Young

said: "My acquaintance with Mr. George led me to believe him to be a very different person from what he represented himself to be as David E. George, the painter. He was eccentric, and though he claimed to be a painter of houses, yet he did no work."

In her sworn statement of January 21, 1921, Mrs. Young says: "During the time I knew Mr. George he was a house painter and worked quite steadily at this trade."

Mr. Bates, still claiming to quote Mrs. Young, says: "At one time the young people of El Reno had a play of some kind. One of the actors became ill and Mr. George (Booth) filled the place to the great admiration and entertainment of those who saw him. When surprise was expressed at his ability as an actor he replied that he had acted some when he was a young man."

Mrs. Young says in her statement of January 21, 1921: "I was told by a friend, whose name I do not remember, that at one time a traveling troupe of players was going through El Reno, and that Mr. George went to see them; that one of them who took the part of a drunken sailor was ill, and Mr. George offered to take the part and filled it very creditably."

Mrs. Young, in a statement made to Mr. Bates in 1903 and again to the present writer in 1921, says that she first became acquainted with D. E. George in March, 1900, and heard his "confession" in April, 1900. She was married May 21, 1900, and immediately moved from El Reno. She knew Mr. George for only a period of two months. Yet Mr. Bates begins her story with the intimation that she had known George for a long time.

The "confession" of D. E. George does not at all

agree with St. Helen's as to how they both, as John Wilkes Booth, escaped from Washington. In Mrs. Young's statement to the writer, she says that at the time of his confession Mr. George "said that he had friends in Washington, who, after he escaped from the theater in which he killed Lincoln, had hidden him in a trunk, and got him on a boat for Europe where he had remained for ten years."

The actual statement obtained from this lady by Mr. Bates is here given. The portion printed in italics was not used by Mr. Bates. Apparently it did not suit his purpose, and to cover the defect he used several pages of alleged conversation.

Mrs. Young (Harper) said in her 1903 statement to Mr. Bates:

"On the eve, of January 13th I was startled, and sur-

Jan 13 1902
I am informed that I made a
a few days ago and an in-
not of having done so.
I recall every letter
able and word of any will
I may have signed at
I owe Jack Bernstein
ten dollars but he
my watch in pawn for
amt.
D. E. George

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 1904.
The money which I left behind
to leave my name. The
I would not have shown to be
found. So each side. How
in country, I have given
up all that makes life
sweet and they brought
nothing upon my family.
I am sure there is no person
in the Kingdom for me. I
man continues me so
have only heard of what
got taken down. (I recall what
did myself) and at last

Above—A letter written by D. E. George just before he committed suicide. He wrongly dated it 1902 instead of 1903. He says, "I am informed that I made a will a few days ago and I am indistinct of having done so. I hereby recall every letter syllable and word of any will that I may have signed at Enid. I owe Jack Bernstein about ten dollars but he has my watch in pawn for the amt."

The will referred to was dated December 31, 1902, and left most of his mythical estate to Geo. E. Smith. Jack Bernstein was an Enid saloon keeper.

At the left is part of a page in John Wilkes Booth's handwriting from his notebook. This was printed in the April 11 issue of *The Dearborn Independent*. A careful comparison shows no similarity in the handwriting.]

prised, by reading in the *Enid Daily News*, the suicide of David E. George, of El Reno (of whom I first became acquainted with in March, 1900, in El Reno, at the home of Mr. & Mrs. J. W. Simmons). Mr. Harper went down on Wednesday morning the fourteenth of January and recognizing him, told the embalmers of a "confession" that David E. George had made to myself, and that they had better investigate. I went to the morgue with Mr. Harper on the fifteenth, and identified the corpse as David E. George.

"In April, 1900, David E. George, took a drug (supposedly morphine), with suicidal intent, and I being at the time a visitor, in the home of J. W. Simmons was called upon to help attend him and watch by his bedside, while said Mrs. Simmons was, necessarily, absent part of the time assisting in the care of the patient. With the promise from me, that I should sacredly keep the secret he was about to divulge, till after his death, he voluntarily told me that he had killed 'one of the best men that had ever lived, Abraham Lincoln.' That he was John Wilkes Booth. He asked me to procure a pencil, and paper, and he wrote upon it, 'I am going to die, before the sun goes down. J. Wilkes Booth,' and handed it to me. I proposed sending for a Doctor, but he vehemently protested, and proceeded with the details of the confession, finally becoming unconscious. Mrs. Simmons sent for Dr. Arnold. His subsequent manner impressed me with the conviction that he was whom he had confessed to be, as he thought, on his dying bed, 'J. Wilkes Booth.' As brevity has been enjoined upon me, I will close by simply stating that I have merely outlined, his confession."

A comparison with Mrs. Young's (Harper's) statement as quoted by Mr. Bates will show that he not only

omitted from his book part of her statement, but when publishing it, added, "Will reaffirm my former statement made in detail of David E. George's confession to me at El Reno, about the middle of April, 1900, as fully as if same were set forth herein."

There is no doubt that D. E. George made the "confession" which Mrs. Young describes in her statement, but it was admittedly made under the influence of morphine.

The following statements of W. E. Robare and C. R. Miller describe D. E. George's "gentlemanly" disposition, his "highest degree of intelligence," his "refinement," his "fluent and captivating conversation," descriptive terms used by Mr. Bates to describe George's personality:

Statement of W. E. Robare:

"I was Chief of Police of El Reno during the time that D. E. George lived here, 1900 to 1903 and remember him very well. I lived about a block from J. W. Simmons' place while George boarded with them. One day he came home drunk and got into a fight with John Sams, Mrs. Simmons' brother, over some trivial matter. George threatened to kill Sams and went to his room for his pistol, a six-shooter. Sams got out of the house and ran down to my place, and I went back with him. Old George came out to meet us with the six-shooter. Sams jumped behind me while I took the pistol away from George and arrested him. I took him down to the police station and 'Progress' Smith (George E. Smith) went on his bond. I kept the pistol and still have it in my possession. After becoming sober, George promised he would never start anything again, and I turned him loose.

"At Police Headquarters, we considered D. E. George as harmless when sober, but a little dangerous when drunk, or under the influence of morphine. He loafed in the station a lot during the two or three years he was in El Reno. He was nobody's fool and must have had a good education. He was tall, had a dark complexion, and his hair was quite mixed with gray. He was always fairly neat, but did not have fine clothes. His eyebrows were heavy and were perfect matches. He did not limp and had a southern drawl. One would take him for a Kentuckian. George considered McCartney of the 'force' and myself as friends. He was a morphine fiend and I saw him under the influence of the drug quite often. He didn't take heavy doses as a regular thing. I am absolutely positive as to his using morphine. We had quite a few 'dope' fiend cases down here in those days which gave us considerable experience with them. He was frequently on a drunk for several days at a time. From the description of his actions he had taken poison when he made his confession to Mrs. Harper here in El Reno in 1901. I was called in at the time he took this poison at Mrs. Simmons' home, at which time he made this confession through Mrs. Harper. I was just leaving the room when I noticed that he motioned for Mrs. Harper to come to his bedside and stopped at the head of the stairway where I heard part of the conversation. I noticed that Mrs. Harper was badly scared, she called me downstairs immediately afterwards and told me of his confession, which was to the effect that he (Mr. George) was John Wilkes Booth who killed Abraham Lincoln. She told me that he said that if he died she might tell this fact, but that in case he lived, he would kill her if she did so.

"Soon after he first came to El Reno he once told me that he had drawn a land claim and that his fortune was made, which he sold soon after. At no time did he have much money. He worked steadily at his trade, house painting, and could easily have made all the money I ever saw him with by the painting he did."

Statement of C. R. Miller, of El Reno, Oklahoma:

"Yes, I remember D. E. George. I ought to. He left here owing me over \$40 for paint. I sold him paint for a couple of years and dye for his mustache and hair. He bought quite a lot of paint during that period and I had always considered him fair pay. For a number of years I owned the cottage which George bought from John J. Davis at 107 South Macomb Street, lot 18 and 19, block 92. As a matter of fact I sold him the paint with which he painted the house. I remember that I passed this house one day while George was working on it and stopped in and talked to him. George lived up with the Simmons' a while in that house. He drank a lot and loafed around the store, but not often when under the influence of booze. I never heard him intimate that he was other than D. E. George. It is rather funny, but while George was here he was known only as an old drunken painter, but as soon as the story got around that he might be John Wilkes Booth all the people that had ever seen him were telling how he quoted Shakespeare and how dramatic he had been. It seemed that then all knew there was something different about old man George. Although George paid his bills, except the last one, he was always hard up and never had any money. Personally, I never considered him more than an ordinary painter, not very good or very bad. I never heard of any recitations that he made here. He mumbled to himself when drunk. He came in the store once and said that he was going back home, some place in Arkansas. Sometime later, he came in and told me that while he was gone he had attended a 'nigger' wedding of some 'niggers' that he knew and said that the 'niggers' had had a preacher come out from Little Rock for there was no preacher good enough for them in the little town. I do not remember that Mr. George was more than ordinarily neat. He was never what you would call slovenly. Sometimes he would get morose spells and hardly talk at all."

Mr. Bates says: "When the editor of the *El Reno Democrat*, in which paper he put an advertisement as a tradesman of house painting, at a cost of four dollars a month, thinking it a useless expense, so universally was it known that George, or Booth, did no such work, suggested this to him, George or Booth, indignantly demanded to know if the editor was uneasy about the price of the card, if so he would pay for it in advance. The editor apologized and the card continued from month to month for two years, up to the date of the death of George.

"Booth's purpose in this is obvious. He wanted to keep himself constantly before the public as a painter, not that he wanted work, but to keep alive his identity as a painter while he played the deceptive character. The little cottage painted for Mr. Anstien was the stage setting to the character, the card in the paper was his program and he played to a successful finish this drama of the journeyman painter."

This interesting theory is badly shattered by the facts as given by Tom F. Hensley, a state senator, in a statement made for this paper at Oklahoma City, January 13, 1921. He was editor of the *El Reno Democrat* in 1901-02-03. He said that he knew D. E. George quite well, that George advertised in his paper for a while, but being slow to pay for his advertising, it was dropped. That it was unnecessary anyway since it was well known all over town that George was a painter. After the advertisement was dropped Mr. Hensley said George came in and kicked, and was quite insulted about its removal, and it was replaced for a short time.

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Mr. Hensley said that around El Reno George was considered just a drunken bum and painter, a down-and-out, not particularly polished, and never had any amount of money. Mr. Hensley said that a woman, who said her name was Laura Ida Booth, wrote a letter from New York City to him claiming that George was her father, and that about the same time he got a letter from Laura Ida's brother, both of which letters rather impressed him that George might be John Wilkes Booth. He said that he wrote the brother, but never heard further from him, but got several letters from Laura Ida Booth in which she was quite anxious to know about the estate of the deceased.

Mr. Bates next devotes space in his book to "Press Comments on the Suicide of David E. George." He takes the liberty of changing these where necessary to make them fit his version of the story.

In his reprint of a story copied from the *Wichita Daily Eagle* of January 22, 1903, which in turn was copied from the *Enid Wave* of January 21, "eyes" is changed to "eyebrows" in the sentence "The eyes of the dead man are not mates in appearance." "Almost" becomes "absolutely" in the sentence "The Booth chin, mouth, upper lip and general description is almost perfect in the corpse." He changes a story that appeared in the *Enid Wave*, January 21, 1903, where it describes D. E. George's handwriting as "large round-lettered schoolboy writing," to "the round, little, scrawley boy writing." The change makes the description more nearly fit the writing of John Wilkes Booth. Although a number of additional instances like this can be pointed out, enough has been quoted to indicate the character of the book.

The *Enid Daily Wave* of January 13, 1903, carries the story of the suicide of David George, stating that it occurred about 10:30 a.m. and that the body was removed to the undertaking rooms, the coroner finding letters to George from George D. Smith, Colfax, Iowa, and thought he might be a relative and wired him.

Mr. Bates then brings in "The mysterious Mr. Smith" whom he presents as the fiscal agent of the Booth family who is supposed to have supplied D. E. George with regular remittances. Upon investigation in Enid and El Reno Mr. Smith was easily found and promptly disposed of the "mystery."

"I first met D. E. George in my store at El Reno, Oklahoma, about a year before his death," wrote Mr. Smith to the author of these articles July 16, 1921.

"D. E. George told me very little about his past, he intimated to me at one time that he had killed a man in Texas, never intimated to me that he was John Wilkes Booth, but several times, while under the influence of liquor, assured me he was a man with a past, and that I would be very much surprised after his death to learn who he was.

"I did believe and still do after D. E. George died that he was really John Wilkes Booth and that big money could be made by exhibiting the remains. After his death I went to Enid, looked the situation over and then went South to consult some lawyers, whom I was acquainted with in El Reno, but was advised by these lawyers that in the eyes of the government John Wilkes Booth was buried and exhibiting the remains of John Wilkes Booth would constitute a felony, by obtaining money under false pretenses. There is no question that at that time while excitement was high, about getting the crowds at an exhibition. However, I did not want to get into trouble with the government over the matter, so allowed the proposition to drop.

"I never attempted to communicate with any of the Booths. I never knew that George was addicted to morphine. George never appeared to have a surplus of money, but appeared to have plenty for ordinary purposes, except when he got on a spree, when he used to borrow small sums from me.

"He appeared to work steady, but sometimes was out of town for a week or two at a time, claiming he had been doing some jobs elsewhere. I believe he always worked on his own contract.

"I cannot tell accurately how much money I loaned him, as the amounts were usually small and promptly returned, except the last two loans. As I recollect it, one amount was for \$10 and the last amount was for \$25, just before he died. These loans I never got.

"I expected to be reimbursed for the loans I made before he died, and was not worrying particularly whether he paid me back or not, as I enjoyed his company; he was always honest about returning the loans, and until the last two when he advised me he would leave me some property to more than cover the amounts due in case he did not return same before his death.

"I decided to return home and let the matter rest until I could get more information as to whether or not I would be able to exhibit the remains. As I got very little encouragement from the lawyers I spoke to and time passed on I dropped the whole matter.

"I believe this is about all that would interest you, but will call you up the first time I am in Detroit. Since seeing you I wrote my nephew in Los Angeles where the body had been on exhibition and inclose his reply. I have also had a number of letters from Mr. Bates, requesting an interview and wanting me to join him by advancing some money to help meet expenses. I expected to see Mr. Bates before this, but have not been South and as for putting any money in the proposition I do not feel inclined to do so.

"Yours truly,
(Signed) "Geo. E. Smith."

When Mrs. Young (Harper) saw the stories about the suicide of George, she recalled his "confession" three years previously, and went with her husband and told her story to the undertaker, who had previously been a New York newspaperman, and saw its news and publicity value. The *Enid, Oklahoma*, papers played this story for all it was worth and dispatched it to the newspapers of many larger cities.

Mr. Bates, in Memphis, Tennessee, saw the story in the *Sunday, January 18, Memphis Commercial Appeal*, which carried it, headed, "Wilkes Booth a Suicide." On the supposition that there might be some connection established between George and St. Helen, he started for Enid, where he arrived January 22.

To support the theory that George and St. Helen were the same, Bates says in his book that a letter had been left for him by the suicide but was stolen from the body in the morgue before he arrived. This letter, he insists, must have been the basis for a telegram received by him on January 17, asking him to come to Enid and identify the body of John Wilkes Booth.

The alleged telegram, being quite a new point in the matter, led to inquiry. Questioned by the writer, Mr. Bates said he could not produce this wire as it had been lost.

Penniman, the Enid undertaker, says: "Bates read of George's death in the newspapers and wired me asking if he could see the body if he came to Enid." Bates himself, after quoting four press reports, says, "These have merely been used for the secondary purpose of showing how I became advised of the suicide's death."

Although Mr. Bates maintains that he started for Enid the afternoon that he received this "wire," January 17, he did not arrive in Enid until six days later, and covers this with the story that he was delayed by wash-

outs on the Frisco system. Since the running time from Memphis to El Reno is only twenty-two hours, the washouts must have been of considerable size, but an investigation covering the period from January 15 to 25, 1903, fails to disclose washouts on either the Frisco or Rock Island lines. The conclusion, therefore, that the wire was imaginary and that David George did not write Bates before he died, is quite in harmony with Mr. Bates' own statements and the facts.

Mr. Bates' book gives a highly colored account of his arrival in Enid, in which "it was estimated that more than fifty thousand men, women, and children had viewed the body of Booth." It is interesting to note that Enid had a population of 3,444 in 1900 and was in a sparsely populated country at that time.

Bates then describes with considerable detail his visit to the Penniman undertaking establishment where "cold, stiff and dead, I beheld the body of my friend, John St. Helen. After a separation of more than twenty-six years, I knew him as instantly as men discern night from day, as the starlight from moonlight, or the moon from the light of day.

"In a few minutes I recovered. I realized now for the first time that I was in the presence of John Wilkes Booth, though I had, in fact, been told so more than a quarter of a century before. I had the tintype picture which St. Helen had given me at Granberry, Texas, twenty-six years ago. I took it out and called upon Penniman and the attendant to bear witness with me to the identity of this dead man with the picture, which



An imaginary pen sketch, reproduced from the Bates' Book where it appears with the cut lines, "Booth (as D. E. George) Playing the Role of a House Painter, and the Only Painting Job He Ever Did."

I showed them, when they replied without a moment's hesitation:

"We need no picture to identify this man in your presence. Yes, this is the same man. It is an axiomatic fact, not debatable, they are one and the same man." [A picture of the dead body taken at this time shows that it was greatly bloated and does not look at all like the tintype of St. Helen. Mr. Bates' recognition after twenty-eight years was, however, "instantaneous."]

"We then compared the high thumb joint on the right hand¹, the small scar on the right brow—the uneven brow—the scar received in the accident mentioned by Miss Clara Morris, raises this brow to an uneven line with the left²; the right leg³ was examined and we found a slight indentation on the surface of the shin bone—Booth's leg was not literally broken, there was a fracture of the shin bone six inches above the ankle; I should say a split or slight shivering of the bone, for besides the indentation on the front of the shin bone there were small scars plainly discernible, where particles of bone seemed to have worked out through the skin (St. Helen, Booth, told me this himself), leaving small round scars, while the general shape of the leg at this point seemed curved a little. His eyes, head, forehead, chin, mustache and hair were all the same as John St. Helen's, taken at the time before stated, and given to me, the only difference being that the hair and mustache were streaked with gray now, especially the mustache, which was quite gray at its parting, under the nose."

Commenting on Mr. Bates' story of his call at the undertaking rooms, Mr. Penniman, in a letter to THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT, says: "This was a pathetic attempt on the part of Mr. Bates to make his arrival sensational and mysterious. Arrived at 6 p.m.; called me to the hotel and kept me there until long after midnight. He came to the store in the morning; wept when he saw the body; said it was his friend John St. Helen—John Wilkes Booth. His book account of all this is 'bunk.' He first identified the body as his friend John St. Helen by a bare unsupported statement and afterward by the papers you have examined.

"I was never able to see any striking resemblance between the body and the tintype. In fact, Bates asked me to do all I could to make the body look like the picture and so we combed the hair and mustache accord-

¹Neither is noticeable in authentic pictures of John Wilkes Booth and if they were there were not noticeable enough to have been mentioned in the many newspaper stories about him at the time of the assassination or in the descriptions.

²But the wrong leg—Booth's injury was in the left leg.

ingly. As to any real substantial evidence offered to prove D. E. George was John Wilkes Booth, I guess you have examined all the 'real positive' proof Mr. Bates has in stock at this time, and have the ability to weigh its value. Bates is the only man who ever tried to convince me as to the real identity of this 'bird,' and he probably used the same selling talk that he used on you. It's good dope, but it doesn't carry."

William J. Ryan embalmed the body of George at the Penniman undertaking establishment and did such a good job that the body is still in fair condition, although looking very much like an Egyptian mummy. When last known it lay in state in Mr. Bates' garage in Memphis. Mr. Ryan says that he has never believed that it was the body of John Wilkes Booth, for the eyes were blue or blue-gray and John Wilkes Booth had black eyes. John St. Helen also had black eyes, and it will be remembered had something wrong with his throat, which made him wheeze. Those in a position to know claimed this was absent in David George. Mrs. Anstine, with whom George roomed for some time in El Reno, stated that his eyes were either dark blue or brown, but not black. Mrs. Young (Harper) stated that George had very large deep blue eyes.

Mr. Ryan says that the pigment in a man's eyes never changes color. Mr. Ryan positively states that no one he ever talked with had identified the body as Booth, except Mr. Bates, and that as far as he could see, both of George's legs were whole and sound.

Mr. Bates, continuing the story of his Enid visit, says, "However, with a manner that indicated indifference to surrounding dangers, I wended my way to the hotel, where Mr. Brown gave me the inside facts about Booth's, or George's, coming to the hotel. He said:

"The press reports about George's coming to the Grand Avenue Hotel and registering on the morning of the 3d day of December, 1902, are correct. While here George was a constant reader of newspapers, remaining in the reading room and office most of the time. He seemed to be a man of perfect leisure, paid his bills by the week promptly, was genial and pleasant in his manner, had a tendency to drink a little too much at times and remained up late at nights, but was a reasonably early riser. [Lee Boyd, who lived at the hotel, and Bob Wilson, who gathered the laundry, state that George was usually in bed at 9:00 a.m.] When I was on night watch he was great company to me; he was well read, often repeating parts of Shakespeare's plays and reciting other poetry, which it seemed natural to him to know, reciting it in such a manner as to be highly entertaining.

"At times George would become sad or rather thoughtfully silent. In these moods his discussions would drift to matters of the 'hereafter.' I asked him, 'You mean after death?' He replied, 'Yes.'

"I remember one night we were alone; he was in what I called his 'off' mood. He raised himself erect in his chair, and in a tragic manner, with gestures and expression suited to the words, he said:

"Am I better than the dog? Oh, no. He is far better than I! He is capable of no sin or crime. Yet when he is found dead his body is placed in the garbage box. Then why not ship my body without a crate to the potter's field of the dog? But I, even I, a man, am unworthy that the putrid flesh shall be torn from my bones by the vultures that prey upon the flesh of the dead brute."

"These utterances were made with such strong self-accusation that I wondered what it could mean, and from that time on I watched every move of the man and listened attentively to every word he said. Whether it was what George said or the manner in which he said a thing, I can't quite understand, but what he said always impressed you. Of this I am sure, in all my twenty years' experience in the hotel business I have never seen such another character.

"He was a handsome man for his age. His black eyes, when in repose, seemed to have lost luster by age, but in conversation or when repeating verses from Shakespeare, or other recitations, they would kindle, flash and sparkle as if inspired or ignited into flame from the burning souls of the eternally damned, while his shapely face and magnificent forehead paled from his natural olive. Sitting or standing with a natural, easy grace, in such moods he made a picture one felt privileged to behold, and never to be forgotten. To my dying day the meeting of this man George, or Booth, will be remembered by me as an epoch in my life.

"It is true, Bates. Be this man who he may, George, Ryan [How did Brown know of Ryan at Hennessey when the Hennessey people did not know of such a man, but did know George? Bates himself had not got the Treadkel story of Smith at this time. How did Brown know it then?—F. L. Black, Marr, St. Helen, Smith, or Booth, he is a man without a model. He looks like no one else, he acted like no one else and he talked like no one else that I ever knew or saw."

"Well, Brown, who is this man?"

"I believe him to be John Wilkes Booth, as he stated on his dying bed. In fact, I don't think he could be any one else."

"Did he at any time before his death intimate his identity other than George?"

"No, he did not. In his manner he was quite unobtrusive and mixed but little with the people in the hotel, and the scenes and recitations I have referred to would always be at a time when we were alone, and the people in the hotel supposed to be asleep."

"I noticed that some of the press reports state that George committed suicide in the morning."

"This was not the case. On the night of the 13th of January, 1903, George came into the office and reading room as usual and spent some time reading and finally writing letters. When he had finished the letters, about ten o'clock p. m., he said he was going down to the drug store, just half a block up the street. He was gone only a short time, when he came to the desk, obtained the key to his room and bade me good-night, requesting to be called for breakfast if he should oversleep his usual time. I saw or heard nothing more of him until about half-past eleven o'clock, when I heard groans coming from the first floor just above the office, in the direction of the room occupied by George. The watchman came in hurriedly

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David E. George as J. Wilkes Booth

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and we went at once to his room. On forcing his door we found him writhing and groaning in great pain. A doctor was called, he pronounced the patient suffering from the effects of poison and began vigorous treatment at once. The pains seemed to come and go, and George seemed to be suffering the greatest agony. After awhile I noticed that the pains or spasms seemed to come closer together, and the patient was drifting from under the control or force of the antidotes, and witnessed the most horrifying struggle for life I ever saw or ever could imagine. About four o'clock in the morning the doctor lost all hope of saving his patient, and informed George that if he had anything to arrange he had better do so. In the meantime Mr. Dumont, the proprietor of the hotel, had come into the room, the doctor having left. George said:

"I have only to say, my name is not George. I am John Wilkes Booth, and I request that my body be sent to the morgue for identification," when death came and relieved the suffering of the man whose name we did not then know, and he died at 6:20 o'clock on the morning of January 14th, 1903.

"The undertaker was notified and George's body removed to the morgue, as he had requested. When it became generally reported that the man's true name was John Wilkes Booth neither Mr. Dumont nor myself had ever seen Mr. Booth nor any member of his family and consequently could not affirm or deny the fact of the true identity of the man, though I was ready to believe then, and do now believe, that George, the man who died, is, in fact, John Wilkes Booth, as he said. The truth is I would believe anything he said, and I understand that he confessed his true identity to a Mrs. Harper of this city, who has identified the body as that of Booth."

But what is passing strange is the fact that George lay in the morgue two days and neither Brown nor the watchman said a word about this confession to the coroner's jury. Had it not been for Mrs. Young (Harper), George would have been buried and the question of his identity never "established."

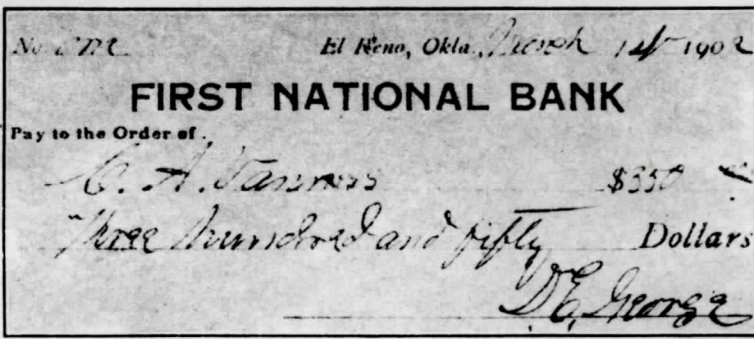
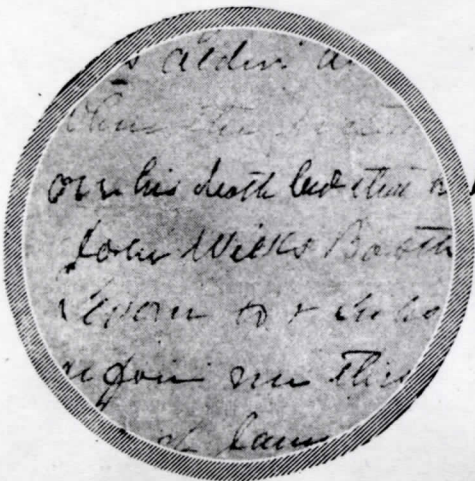
The statement of Messrs. Dumont and Brown, as published by Mr. Bates, now claims attention:

"To Whom It May Concern: We, S. S. Dumont, proprietor, and B. B. Brown, clerk, of the Grand Avenue Hotel, in the city of Enid, and Territory of Oklahoma, declare that we, and each of us, knew a gentleman who registered as a guest of said hotel on the 3d day of December, 1902, under the name of D. E. George, who on the 13th day of January, 1903, committed suicide in said hotel by taking fifteen grains of strychnine or arsenic, and died from the effects of said poison at 6:30 o'clock a. m., on the 14th day of January, 1903, and that we have this day been shown by F. L. Bates, of Memphis, Tennessee, a small tintype picture, together with a photograph, and we say that said tintype picture and photograph are the same and perfect pictures or likenesses in each and every feature of the said D. E. George, the only difference being that George, or whosoever he was, was older at the time of his death than when the pictures were taken.

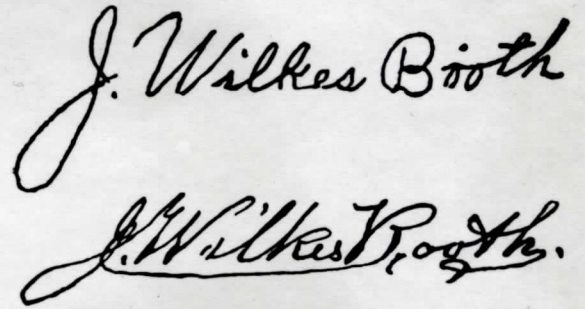
(Signed) "B. B. BROWN."
"S. S. Dumont."
"Sworn to and subscribed before me this, the 22d day of January, 1903."
(Signed) "GUY S. MANOTT,"
"Notary Public."
"My commission expires October 22d, 1906."

Compare this with a photostatic reproduction shown below and in the next column of the affidavit that was in Mr. Bates' possession.

This comparison of the original with that given in Mr. Bates' book, as reproduced above, shows that there has been added to the published affidavit these clauses: "in said hotel by taking fifteen grains of strychnine or arsenic, and died from the effects of said poison at 6:30 o'clock a. m. on the 14th day of." The original written affidavit merely says "taking poison." Now look again at the photograph of the affidavit, as taken by Bates, in the space at the left of the signatures of B. B. Brown and S. S. Dumont and compare with that in Mr. Bates' book. In the written affidavit it states, "George declaring on his deathbed that he was John Wilkes Booth," but the Bates' book does not repeat this line. The original statement as given by Brown and Dumont ended with the word "taken." Brown and Dumont then signed, and the notary finished his part of the statement and stamped it. Notice the ink spread in the words "on" and "John" when written over the seal—which shows that the addition was made sometime after the original statement was written. The remainder of the sentence after "George declaring—" had to be written



The signature of D. E. George at the left. First below is "J. Wilkes Booth" written by George for Mrs. Harper when he made the "confession" in April, 1900, and second below J. Wilkes Booth's own signature. There isn't the slightest resemblance.

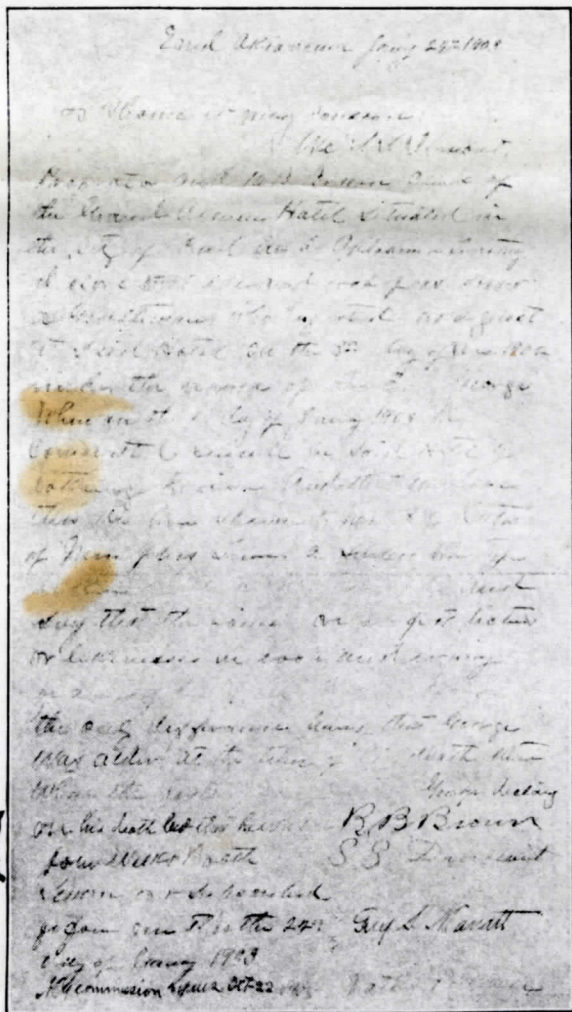


Mr. Penniman, the undertaker, states that George died about 10:30 or 11 o'clock on the morning of January 13. Even Mr. Bates quotes in his book Mrs. Young's (Harper's) statement that "On the evening of January 13th I was startled and surprised by reading in the Enid Daily News of the suicide of David E. George." The sworn statement of R. A. Field, M. D., who was called to attend George also attests the fact of the death occurring on the thirteenth. "He made no confession from the time I entered the room," says Dr. Field, "in fact he could not speak."

When David George's groans were heard on the morning of January 13, Lee Boyd, also a roomer at the Grand Avenue Hotel, was the first to enter his room, an inside hall bedroom the outer partition of which did not run up to the ceiling. Mr. Boyd, in his sworn statement, says, "I stepped on a trunk in the hall and climbed over the partition. George was lying on his bed partly dressed, groaning, and in convulsions. I opened the door and told Minnie to have Mrs. Dumont get a doctor. In about five minutes, Doctor R. A. Field came. Before he could prepare a hypodermic Mr. George was dead. George made no confession at this time that he was Booth, in fact, he did not speak, only groaned with pain."

George did not make a deathbed "confession." George was not St. Helen. Even St. Helen's alleged confession has no affidavits nor written statements to substantiate a single word of it, sources are not given, statements are misquoted, affidavits altered, an historical honesty absolutely ignored.

The next example of "evidence" does not rise above



Above—The original affidavit given Bates by Brown and Dumont with the sentence added "George declaring on his deathbed that he was John Wilkes Booth." At the left is a full-size reproduction of "on" and "John" showing how the ink spread when these words were written over the seal sometime after the original was signed and notarized.

the level of those already considered. Mr. Bates says, "Being a constant attendant at the theaters at El Reno, Enid, Oklahoma City, and Guthrie in the early part of December, 1900, Booth was much struck by the genius of the leading lady of one of the companies then playing in these towns, beginning at Enid. In fact, Booth regarded her a genius and sought an introduction through her manager, claiming at the time to be a correspondent of the Dramatic Mirror, of New York, and giving his name as J. L. Harris."

During one of our interviews, Mr. Bates stated that the actress he referred to was Mrs. Charles A. (Josie) Cameron, who was playing in "The Woman in the Case" at Enid, Oklahoma, in March, 1901.

Mrs. Cameron was found in Chicago and from her the writer learned that the Enid man who represented

the Dramatic Mirror, to whom Mr. Bates referred, was John Walter Robinson. Investigation at Enid showed that Robinson had died a few months before George came. The Enid Daily Wave of October 13, 1902, carried a complete story of his death.

Mr. Bates next attempted to convince Joseph Jefferson that John St. Helen was John Wilkes Booth, but according to the following letter did not make much of an impression.

This letter was in answer to an inquiry from Mr. Oliver D. Street who in 1903 was Secretary of the Tennessee Valley Historical Society.

Buzzard's Bay, Mass., June 10, 1903.

"Mr Oliver D Street

"Dear Sir:

"In reply to your enquiry I beg to say that a gentleman called on me last spring and related to me his story contained in your letter. He showed me also a tintype much disfigured and asked me if I did not recognize it as John Wilkes Booth. I told him that it bore a kind of resemblance to him but that as I had not seen Booth since he was 19 years old and as the tintype was evidently that of a man of 55 or sixty it was quite impossible for me to give him any satisfactory information on the subject—and this is what he calls my "identification of Booth's remains"—rather weak evidence for such an important case—and I do not think that Miss Clara Morris (who also denies the identification) has had any further testimony beyond the uncertain tintype.

"The gentleman further stated that he was trying to obtain the evidence so that he could get possession of the dead man's estate for his client. My opinion is that there is not the slightest foundation for the truth of this rambling story.

"Sincerely yours
(Signed) "J Jefferson"

Mr. Street also possesses a letter from Clara Morris, the actress, in which she denies any identification of the tintype as Booth and any belief in Mr. Bates' story.

The last chapter of Mr. Bates' book is devoted to the "identification" of the tintype by Junius Brutus Booth, the nephew of John Wilkes, but born January 6, 1868, three years after the assassination, and who had never seen his uncle John Wilkes Booth. Quoting from Mr. Bates: "While Mr. Junius Brutus Booth was in the city of Memphis, playing an engagement at the Lyceum Theater in support of Mrs. Brune, I sought an introduction to him, and by pre-arrangement was accorded an interview at my office, which lasted for several hours, being of much interest to myself as well as Mr. Booth. At this meeting, because of my former meeting and friendship for and close association with John St. Helen, I was enabled to recount to him much of the private history of the Booth family, which was enjoyed by Mr. Booth with an interest equaled only by his astonishment."—Then follows the usual affidavit.

Memphis, Tenn.
2-21-03.

"(F. L. Bates) I hand you Mr. Junius Brutus Booth, a tintype picture which was taken at Glenrose Mills, Hood County, Texas, on or about June, 1877, and handed to me by one John St. Helen, as a means of at some future time of identifying John Wilkes Booth. Will you kindly examine this picture, and in your own way identify the same."

"I, Junius Brutus Booth, of the City of Boston, Massachusetts, recognize the likeness of John Wilkes Booth, not only in comparison with other photographs and pictures of said John Wilkes Booth, but I can also trace a strong family resemblance and a likeness to different members of my family, in the said tintype.

"I am the eldest son of John Wilkes' brother, Junius Brutus Booth, born in Boston, January 6th, 1868. Those now living having any direct relation to John Wilkes Booth are, first, myself and my brother Sydney Booth, 16 Gramercy Park, New York. Creston Clarke, 16 Gramercy Park, New York; Wilfred Clark, New York; Dollie Clark Morgan, Vendome Hotel, New York; Adrienne Clark, Brighton, England, children of Asia Booth, sister of John Wilkes; Marion Booth daughter of Junius Brutus Booth, said John Wilkes' brother, also being my half-sister, New York.

"The family of John Wilkes Booth's father, Junius Brutus Booth (the elder) and his wife, Mary Booth, consisted of my father Junius Brutus, the eldest, Rosalie Booth, Asia Booth, Edwin Thomas Booth and Joseph Adrian Booth. Subsequent or prior to my father's birth there was another son, who died in infancy.

"The Clarks mentioned would be connected with John Wilkes Booth by the marriage of his sister, Asia Booth to John Sleeper Clark.

(Signed) "Junius Brutus Booth."

There is little doubt that the tintype of St. Helen has some resemblance to John Wilkes Booth. This resemblance was aptly put by a Leadville, Colorado, undertaker when shown the tintype by the writer in January, 1921, "Yes, I recognize that picture. I buried a hundred fellows here that looked very much like that back in the early days."

The proofs of identification of the man shot in the Garrett barn and the true story of the disposal of John Wilkes Booth's body will be given in the next issue.

at the left of the signature, and was inserted by another hand after the affidavit was signed and sealed.

Mr. Bates' weird story of George's death agonies needed confirmation. How could there be a real deathbed "confession" unless the corpse could be kept alive long enough to make it! Therefore, in Mr. Bates' story George does not die until 6:30 a. m. of the fourteenth, whereas the Enid Daily Wave of January 13 shows that D. E. George died on the thirteenth. It is not often, even in these days of journalistic enterprise, that a newspaper actually reports all the details of a man's suicide, his removal to the morgue, and the impaneling of a coroner's jury over him the day before he dies!