

A MULTIPLICITY OF BOOTHS

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Chapter 16

"Local Doctor is asked to buy Real Mummy of John Wilkes Booth" is the heading of a story that was published in the Bloomington, Indiana, Sunday Bulletin, April 26, 1925. Variations of the same heading appeared in other newspapers, for the Iowa firm making the offer had broadcasted ^{their advertising} circulars, one of which the author received.

The Bloomington paper, after discussing the claims made for the mummy, stated "That there may be some truth in the matter lies behind the fact that the firm handling the proposition is considered a very reliable firm, dealing principally in real estate and patents, but frequently ~~dealing~~ in more or less unusual things such as this mummy. The offer made to the Bloomington man was that the body would be shipped to Bloomington along with a large number of sensational books giving the true story of Booth's life, in exchange for some patents and manufacturing property held by the doctor and a cash payment of \$5,000."

The story that John Wilkes Booth escaped was not new, however, for quite soon after his body was hidden from the sight of man within the walls of the old Washington arsenal, rumors began to spread over the country that the ^{army} officers who had been credited with the capture of the assassin had shot someone else and palmed the substitute body onto the government in order to collect the reward. It was said and by many believed that the real John Wilkes Booth had escaped to the Island of Ceylon, to Mexico, to Palestine. Since that time scores of impossible stories of the escape, subsequent life and lonely death of Booth have been printed with a wealth of circumstance to support them, and thousands of persons may be found, especially in the South, who will never believe that Booth perished in the Garrett barn. All of this in view of the ^{minute} ~~minute~~ flight, capture, and identification details brought out during the two years following the assassination leads one to believe that there are those who have a sentimental preference for fiction over fact and who are prone to a belief in ^{See preceding chapter - words} possibilities rather than probabilities. Suggest to ^{such folks} ~~them~~ a possibility which intrigues the imagination and they accept and propagate it as gospel, and proved fact. It is true, unfortunately, that many who lack criticism and caution and follow faith blindly and without reason also unconsciously twist facts to their prejudices and partisanship. It is ^{persons} people of this class who have followed and sup-

ported the myth makers, the charlatans and pretenders throughout the ages. Depend on this, dear reader: Tell the most preposterous tale and you will always find some who will believe. Repeat it often and your following will grow.

Since the days of Nero, whose widely doubted suicide gave rise to many impostors throughout the Roman Empire, any secrecy or mystery surrounding the imprisonment, assassination or disappearance of the famous and infamous has stirred the world's imagination and caused many to dispute the alleged official reports. Each of these many impostors had a following made up of persons with great faith but little reason.

There is the story of Perkin Warbeck who, at the time Columbus discovered America, was being entertained all over Europe as Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the two sons of Edward IV, both of whom history says were murdered in the Tower of London. Through the assistance of the Scottish King, James IV, a noble marriage was arranged, and England was for six years much upset by this pretender to its throne. Warbeck, before his death, confessed that he was but the son of a poor Flemish burgher. Those who had investigated the genesis of this pretender before his confession and were in possession of the facts were not believed by his followers, many of whom were wilfully blinded by their prejudice against the then reigning English king.

Two centuries later we have the mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask, whose story supplied material to several great novelists. For many a year visitors to the old prison on the Isle of Sainte Marguerite have been shown the masked man's cell and regaled with tales of his luxurious and mysterious life, which ended in 1694.

It is said that, imprisoned by Louis XIV, this strange personage was compelled to live in prison hidden from recognition by a mask with steel springs, but was treated with great deference and indulged with the daintiest food and finest raiment. Who was he? According to the most striking and widely disseminated of the many legends and the one supported by Voltaire, the masked prisoner was an older brother of Louis, but of doubtful legitimacy.

Some believed that he was the son of Oliver Cromwell, and one writer went to the ridiculous extent of claiming that a son born of the masked man of mystery and

the failer's daughter was spirited off to Corsica and became the ancestor of the great Napoleon. The most likely and best authenticated story is that he was not a royal personage at all, but Count Mattioli, the minister of an Italian prince, and a dangerous character by reason of his intrigues.

Another century passes, and we have the mystery before which those of the past pale into insignificance - that of the Lost Dauphin, and the forty claimants, thirty-nine of whom, of necessity, ^umost have been liars. These without exception have brought forth most amazing legends, myths, and traditions of the continued existence of persons supposed to be dead.

After Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette paid the penalty imposed by the Revolution, their son Louis, a boy ten years of age, was alleged to have died January 5, 1795, in the Temple and to have been buried in the cemetery of Ste. Marguerite. Rumor soon ran through the world of fashion that the grave in Ste. Marguerite held the body of an unknown child, who three days before his death was substituted for the Prince by Royalist plotters with the connivance of the guards. It was claimed that the Revolutionists learned of the substitution and watched all roads leading out of France for Louis, but in vain. The next forty years averaged a prince a year and France was often in a quandary about the claims of her numerous would-be rulers. Among the forty was Jean Marie Hervagoult, son of a tailor, whom many persisted in believing to be the Lost Dauphin even after he confessed his real identity. He died in 1815 and a new pretender appeared in the person of Mathurin Bruneau, a shoemaker, who is said to have died in prison in 1822. It was eleven years later that there was imprisoned in Paris, Louis Hebert, alias Richemont, who had been claiming in the highways and byways of France that he was Louis XVII.

The United States and Germany, however, brought forth the two most pretentious pretenders to the French throne, in Eleazer Williams and Karl William Naundorff, the first an Episcopal missionary to the American Indians, the second a watchmaker of Spandau, Prussia, and the founder of a new religious faith. Romantic indeed is the story of the American claimant, who as a ten-year-old boy is said to have been left by two French Catholic priests with a half-breed Iroquois chief named Thomas Williams, and to have been brought up by him

near Lake George, New York, with his other children, as Eleazer.

The boy's memory had been impaired by illness, and when left with the Williamses he was in a condition of half imbecility and his recollections of the past were spasmodic and confused. His half-Indian brothers were amazed and sometimes frightened by what they considered a demented imagination - daydreams of gilded halls and princely courts. Funds for Eleazer's education were furnished by parties unknown, and without doubt he was the scion of some French family, hidden away in the American wilderness for reasons known only to those who brought him to our shores. No effort was ever made by Williams himself to gain recognition as the Dauphin, and as far as can be learned, his life was above reproach.

This cannot be said of the Prussian pretender, Karl William Naundorff, who managed to keep his name before Europe for many years and even went so far, it is stated, as to wound himself to gain sympathy in an effort to prove an attempted assassination.

He told, as did many of the forty, most likely stories of his escape from France as the Dauphin, and possibly gained a greater number of partisans than any of the others. Many of these still believed in him after stories were published showing that he was a swindler and counterfeiter. He was eventually expelled from France and died in Holland in 1845.

As recently as March 26, of this year, a blind representative of the Naundorff family, "Louis, Prince de Bourbon," according to the New York Herald Tribune Paris Bureau, entered suit in the French courts against the publishers of an encyclopedia which referred to his pretensions as the grandson of the Dauphin as "intriguery." The report states that the blind prince's personal appearance is strangely like that of the Bourbons of the 18th Century.

Articles and books galore have been written by devotees of both Williams and Naundorff supporting their claims, and strangely enough they carry conviction. However, only one can be true, if either is. Even today there is a pretender, a lieutenant in the French colonial army, who is recognized by the Royalists of France as the Grandson of Louis XVII, the Lost Dauphin who, it is claimed, escaped to England and there ended his days.

Russia of a century ago has supplied a delightful example of the human pen-

chant for making legend on the slightest pretext. Alexander I, grandson of Catherine the Great, so the story goes, took a passive part in the assassination of Czar Paul, his mad father, and in expiation decided many years later to become dead to the world and spend the remainder of his life as a monk. Suddenly, taking the Empress, his physician and a few personal servants, Alexander, late in the autumn of 1825, hastened to a small town in the Crimea. He had announced that he needed rest and quiet.

Soon in St. Petersburg bulletins were received of the Emperor's illness, and then came one announcing his death. A body was returned to the palace and buried in great state in the last resting place of the Czars. Several years later it was learned that the Empress had purchased her mourning garments in Moscow on the way South while the Emperor was still in good health.

The second step in the legend was that the young Czar Nicholas I, Alexander's brother and heir, for a period of many years conducted a secret correspondence in a mysterious code with a strange and most devout monk in a small, far-away Siberian monastery. Legend has it that about 1840 Nicholas hastened to this distant man of God, who was ill, and for four hours was closeted alone with him, no one hearing a word that passed between them. A few days later the monk was gathered to his fathers and it is said that Nicholas was sorely grieved.

Just before the late war, research students working in the Russian Imperial Library claimed to have discovered that the handwriting of the secret letters, which had been preserved, corresponded with that of Alexander's state papers. The war halted these researches, and unless the Bolshevists have better preserved the records of the Imperial Library than the reports would indicate, the fate of Alexander, whom Napoleon claimed was the greatest diplomat of all Europe, will ever remain legendary.

Wars have been the chief producers of the situations out of which have grown these legendary escapes and substitutions, and the Great War is no exception. What became of Lord Kitchener, the greatest British soldier of his time, and did the Czar of all the Russias and his family perish by the hands of their Bolshevik enemies?

Mentioning Lord Kitchener revives the story told of Sir Hector McDonald, who was with Kitchener in his Egyptian campaigns. Sir Hector, "Fighting Mac," as he was popularly called - one of the few private soldiers in the British Army to rise to the rank

of general - was sent to command the troops in Ceylon. Considerable criticism arose as to his administration and grave charges were made against him in England. Hastening home he stopped in Paris and there committed suicide in March, 1903. Soon legend stepped into the scene with the claim that the suicide was a trick to keep Sir Hector from the necessity of facing his accusers and that the dead body of someone else was interred in his stead. The Russo-Japanese War was the theater for the next act. General Nogi was Sir Hector in person. Undoubtedly this apparently absurd story could easily have been disproved, but Japan was a long, long way off, and General Nogi was little known to the outside world until after his brilliant exploits in the reduction of Port Arthur and the capture of Mukden placed his name among the great war gods. In accordance with the traditions of old Japan, he committed hara-kiri on the death of the Japanese Emperor in 1912. He and Sir Hector had suicide in common, if not their identities.

In 1916, Lord Kitchener set sail on the cruiser Hampshire on a military mission to Russia. Official report says the boat while passing through the Orkney Islands, off the north of Scotland, was destroyed on June 5 by an unswept German mine and that nearly all on board were lost, among the number, Lord Kitchener. Legend says this is not true, that the boat went down but Kitchener was among the few saved. Stories were circulated that he landed on Russian soil in safety. It was believed that "K of K" bore a charmed life. On many occasions he had miraculously escaped death, twice at the hands of assassins and once in the front-line trenches in France. Many could not or would not credit his tragic death. The latest "revelation" is that Kitchener's body was washed up and buried by fishermen on one of the Scandinavian islands.

In the Spring of 1926 the Soviet government, through the Leningrad Krasnaya Gazetta, acknowledged as authentic the story of the execution of the Czar, Nicholas II, the Czarina, the Czarevitch and the four Grand Duchesses, in July, 1918, in the Ipatieff house at Ekaterinburg. It is unlikely that this will destroy the numerous legends that the Russian royal family is still alive, for the majority of the Russian peasants believe that the "Little Father" survives and again will be their ruler.

There are those who are convinced that the Royal family is living incognito

ANASTASIA
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AMUNDSEN

in a Siberian monastery or is hidden in the mountains of Japan. A combination of the Russian Czar and Lord Kitchener legends occurs in the fantastic story that Nicholas was rescued by Kitchener and is concealed in a Tibetan monastery awaiting an opportune time to return to Russia and again assume his throne.

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Newspaper headlines informed us about three years ago that one of the Grand Duchesses had escaped and was on her way from Vladivostock to the United States. Thus far she has not materialized. Possibly she was turned back by the fate of her royal father who, Dame Rumor reported, had been compelled to work his way over as an oiler on an American freighter in 1920. And, according to a recent story in the New York Times, a young woman with deep-blue Slavic eyes, red-brown hair, and a bruised mouth that smiles only on one side, is dying in a private hospital in Berlin. She says she is the youngest daughter of the late Czar Nicholas, the Grand Duchess Anastasia.

These many legends surrounding the disappearance of princes, potentates, the great and near great, are not astonishing when it is realized that they are kept alive by faith, by people wanting to believe. They illustrate the irrepressible vitality of pleasing myths. A story with the element of mystery is always most intriguing, especially where it surrounds a royal personage.

Many claimants come forward because of the pecuniary and social advantages to be gained. There is then the other class of pretenders who are afflicted with a type of mania which causes them to confess crimes and identities not their own. Police departments are confronted almost daily with persons of this type.

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We have also those about whose birth there is some mystery, who gradually build up legends which they themselves believe. For instance, the case of a western girl who became convinced that she was a daughter of French nobility who had been left with a woodsman's family. About six years ago she persuaded the editor of an old and conservative magazine that her claims were valid, and he published an unusual diary which she professed to have written as a child. This diary contained French phrases and words that would not ordinarily come within the scope of learning of a woodsman's daughter. Her parents, however, contradicted her story and offered proof that she was their own daughter.

When dope fiends have taken an over-dose of some narcotic and as a result are

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delirious, they are prone to confess to crimes committed by others and to claim different identities. This was the case with David George, the Enid, Oklahoma, suicide of 1903, who two years previously, while under the influence of an overdose of morphine, claimed that he was John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, and who told an entertaining story of how he escaped from Washington on the fatal night. His claims to infamy will be discussed more in detail in a subsequent chapter.

There is far greater interest in John Wilkes Booth escaped than in John Wilkes Booth captured in the Garrett barn, for about him escaped there will always hover that air of mystery, of uncertainty, of romance, to fire the imagination, and as long as there is mystery and uncertainty there will be lost heirs and royal pretenders and we shall have these peculiar instances of marvelous fiction. And just as long as people are too prone to intellectual laziness to ask or search for sensible proof will there be those who will believe these wild tales - and the wilder the tale the stronger the belief.

The Wilkes Booth legendary escape is the only one in the United States which has grown to proportions comparable to Europe's many times told tales, and although the chapters of this book describing the flight, pursuit, capture, identification and burial of Booth are filled with the descriptions of exhibits and substantiating testimony taken under oath when ^{sixty-year-old} ~~the~~ ^{of witnesses} their memories were fresh during the two years immediately following the assassination ^{and} which show that without the slightest doubt that Booth was ~~killed by the federal pursuit force, the legend that he escaped doubtless~~ ^{captured}. Some will persist in believing that President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of War Stanton, Secretary of State Seward, General G. C. Augur commanding the Department of Washington, The United States War Department, the Federal Secret Service, and the officers and men pursuing the assassin entered into a vast conspiracy to allow him to escape in order to make Andrew Johnson President and to collect the reward offered for John Wilkes Booth dead or alive. Many of the faithful followers of the various Booth myths have venerated them with plausibility, romance and mystery and no amount of material or documentary evidence will ever convince them that their legends are but entertaining fiction.

wilkes booth

One of the first of the published rumors that Booth escaped appeared in 1867 ^{in the newspapers during the latter part of 1866} in the Louisville, Kentucky, Journal. This story claimed that John Wilkes Booth had been seen alive in the East Indies and that a Captain Tolbert had won the bet of a large sum of money by demonstrating this fact.

In a letter

To the Editor of the New York Times.

New York, Thursday, Jan. 10, 1867.

a man who signs himself "James E Campbell
~~has~~ has this ^{where?} comment to make! -

"Since my arrival ^{where?} here on the 5th inst. I have been informed it is the belief of a number of individuals in this City and elsewhere that J. Wilkes Booth, the conspirator and assassin, still exists; and that the man who was shot in the barn by his pursuers, and who was supposed to be Booth, was a person who had been an accomplice in the conspiracy, and strongly resembled Booth.

"This has reminded me of an incident which came under my notice in Calcutta, British, India, while stopping there during the month of July, 1866.

"Two gentlemen were discussing the merits of some of the leading conspirators in the assassination of our late lamented President. One of them, apparently a man of more than ordinary intelligence and of decidedly strong Southern proclivities, was very eloquently defending J. Wilkes Booth, John H. Surratt, Payne, Atzerodt, Mudd, and others. His adversary, a gentleman from Boston, Mass. and evidently a strong Union man, made use of some bitter sarcasm when speaking of them; and said, among other things, that, in his opinion, "any man calling himself an American, who sympathized with Booth, deserved the same fate."

"The same fate!" repeated the Southerner. "I will lay a wager of five hundred pounds sterling that John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated President Lincoln, is alive and in good health at the present time; and agree to furnish proof of it within six months."

"I accept the wager," ~~was~~ was the rejoinder of the other party; and, both being men of means, the money was soon forthcoming, and deposited

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in the hands of the proprietor of the hotel to await the final decision.

" Curiosity prompted me to inquire the name of the party whose strange offer had been so readily accepted; and was informed he was no other than the late notorious rebel pirate, Lieut. William Martin Tolbert, of Shenandoah notoriety. (formerly of Troy, Ohio, but more recently of this city.) and who is at present master of the ship Ocean Bird.

" What could have influenced him to make a bet of five hundred pounds upon a thing so absurd, and which he must eventually sacrifice, has been a puzzle to me, and must be solved by a wiser head. "

~~+~~ respectfully, etc.

" ~~JAMES E. CAMPBELL.~~ "

Note → (Lucibel Scrap Book p 39)

This story was published apparently in a great many newspapers. The scrap book referred to above has an ^{undated} clipping from the Louisville, Kentucky, Journal printed sometime during the latter part of 1866 which would indicate that it was first printed by that Publication)

~~seen alive in the East Indies and that a Captain Tolbert had won the bet of a large sum of money by demonstrating this fact. A letter published in the Journal claimed that Captain Tolbert, who commanded a privateer in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, while in Bombay and learned that Booth was hidden on the Island of Ceylon. This story was apparently never fully investigated and whatever circumstantial evidence there may have been to sustain the statements in the letter was never disclosed.~~

It even was alleged that the man who killed the President was not John Wilkes Booth. This was in March of 1866 or 1867. (Before release of Jeff Davis in May, 1867, King stated that his return to U. S. was to effect such release, L.C.B. page 39) ^{at that time} When there appeared ~~also~~ in the Louisville Papers (The Louisville Democrat and The Louisville Courier) the statement of a man named Sterling King who had been arrested about the middle of March charged with having stolen a horse and buggy from the proprietor of a Cincinnati livery stable. After his commitment to jail, King confessed that he and not Booth was the man who had killed Abraham Lincoln. According to newspaper reports King claimed that on the night of the assassination he had entered Ford's theatre as any other person, purchasing a ticket and paying for it. He said that he had entered the President's box and shot him with a single-barrel pistol, which he let fall at the time he leaped from the box. He gave as his reason for using a single-barrel pistol, ^{the fact} that he was compelled to leave it behind him, and if it had been a revolver those in the box might have used it against him.

He further said that after he shot the President and leaped from the box, he passed by several persons, "but one of whom he knew, Miss Laura Keene", but that "she did not know him." J. Wilkes Booth, according to King's statement, "was in the rear of the theatre awaiting with horses." From the vicinity of Ford's Theater he declared that he went to the residence of Secretary Seward, and after forcing an entrance made an attack upon the Secretary, cutting him in the throat with a bowie-knife. According to the story King's only regret seemed to be that he had not killed the Secretary. He claimed that there was another person in the affair who had not then been apprehended who was to have killed Secretary Stanton, but who failed to fulfill his pledge.

King denied the statement that Booth had anything to do with the killing, with

the exception of assisting him to make his escape from the City of Washington. The newspaper accounts said that King "in his written statement, which is now in the hands of the military" gave the route he had pursued after leaving Washington. In this he claimed that the man killed in the Garrett barn, and who was said to have been Booth, was a prisoner who escaped from an Ohio prison. He said that he had gone "in company with Booth, from Washington to Canada, and from thence to the Island of Cuba," and that "his object in returning to the United States was for the purpose of releasing Jeff Davis."

He declared that Mrs. Surratt knew nothing of the conspiracy, although he confessed that the parties who planned the affair met regularly at her house and that he was stopping there "some ten or twelve days previous to the execution of the plot."

"We give the above statement of King," said The Louisville Democrat, "without vouching for the truth of same, though there are some plausible circumstances connected with his statement, and it would appear that he had some connection or knowledge of the plot. His confession has been sent to Washington to be acted upon by the President."

The newspaper story states that on the Friday following the confession King "finding that his statement was likely to get him into a very serious difficulty, determined to put an end to his miserable existence, and having obtained a small penknife, "he opened the veins of his left arm, and would have bled to death, had it not been that the attempt was discovered by his cell-mate, and an alarm given. The story also contained the statement that King during the war had "figured in both armies" and had been "convicted by a military commission in each and sentenced to death." King claimed that his motive for making the confession was that "there were those in Washington who knew him," and since his name and the fact of his apprehension had been published it was useless for him to attempt further concealment. This story has as much foundation in fact as the other Booth myths and for that reason has been repeated. The newspapers first publishing King's confession were convinced that he had concocted the tale for the purpose, securing the release of himself and two other prisoners there in jail, who said that they also knew something of the assassination. They had figured that if they were turned over to the military authorities, the charges then resting against them would be dropped and the new ones not being possible of proof would eventually result in freedom.

A newspaper clipping to be found in the Lincoln Scrap Book, Congressional Library, Washington, D.C. (pp 96-97) contains a statement published within two or three years after the Civil War that "The St Louis Democrat publishes a letter from a gentleman, for whose character it vouches, which narrates that an Alabama refugee told the writer that he believed J. Wilkes Booth was alive, for the reason that when in Washington he entertained a beggar one night, who, after writing a note, went outside and held the following conversation with some one who met him: Some one asked him if it was ready. He replied, "Yes, what news?" and was answered, "None; only Mr. Johnson wishes you to make haste. He says he cannot breathe easy until you are on board the vessel." "And no doubt he wishes the vessel may founder," was my guest's reply, rather hoarsely and scarcely audible; but he continued, "I must be off in the morning, so farewell, Jack."

After the beggar had departed his host picked up some scraps of paper on the floor, pasted them together, discovered that they made a note of cypher, of which, after a long while, he discovered the key, and published it as follows:

"Dr. Friend: I shall ever remember your kindness. The J D Government cannot aid me now, and if I fail to escape, God only knows my fate, and your arm will be powerless. If you succeed in your part, I shall return; otherwise, never. Yes, I leave tomorrow.

J. W. B."

"Yours in life and death
"June 1st, 1865."

The Atlanta Constitution for Sunday, July 30, 1893, published a story dated July 29th from Yoakum, Texas, in which their correspondent comments on what he terms "a strange account of Booth's connection, or rather lack of connection, with the assassination," given out by "Major Sidney Smith, of Dallas."

According to the writer Major Sidney Smith's story which had been published recently in a St. Louis Newspaper was to the effect that Booth was in Richmond, Va., with friends on the evening of the assassination of President Lincoln; and that, upon hearing that he was accused of the bloody act, he did the unlikely and foolish thing of fleeing from a perfect alibi, from the instant ability to present himself to the federal commander in Richmond and prove the physical impossibility of his having been the assassin, he took flight

by horse to Charleston, sailed to Europe and remained a fugitive, fearful wanderer on that continent - whether already dead or yet alive, - the major is unfortunately still ignorant.

"Who did kill Lincoln then?

"The major has positive information that it was a semi-insane lieutenant of Quantrell's famous guerrillas who "left Richmond, stole into the city of Washington disguised as a farmer and killed President Lincoln." He escaped to the south, as the story goes, and died in seclusion some years ago.

"How, then, did Booth's name get mixed in with the assassination?

"The major says it was due to the vengefulness of a young woman in the theatre companies who had been in love with Booth and abandoned by him. In the general paralysis of the dread transaction in the theatre she recognized a sufficient general resemblance of the assassin to Booth to give her the inspiration to charge the crime upon him and the infuriated people immediately corroborated her charge and put the odium upon the innocent object of her malice." The Constitution Correspondent's ironic comment is, "A very unique and novelistic theory, indeed, but it vanishes into the most absurd grotesquerie of invention when brought to the touchstone of facts."

IS J. WILKES BOOTH ALIVE?

Chris Ritter, a Boon Companion, Asserts That He Is

Affirms He Is Enos, the Great South American Actor

Ed Fox Was the Man Killed for Booth at Richter's Barn

Some Corroborative Facts Indorsing Ritter's Revival of an Old Story

These were the headlines of a story printed in The Chicago Journal, January 31, 1897, based on a dispatch from Anderson, Indiana, ~~the day before~~ ^{January 30} which led off with the startling quotation:

"Man, I have killed Lincoln; I have this night done a great deed for humanity.

David, will you stay with me?" The clock in the inner rooms on the third floor of the old Pacific hotel at Washington, which were then the scenes of the council of the Knights of the Golden Circle, pointed to 10 o'clock. The date was April 14 - the time was night - a night which went into history as one of the "darkest" in the events attending the great struggle

which was then on between the north and the south.

"At St. Mary's hospital in this city," read the Anderson dispatch, "on one of the white beds, lies Christopher C. Ritter, who came here three months ago from Cynthiana, Ky. Life is passing away, and in his last moments he tells a story which will strengthen the belief that John Wilkes Booth, the slayer of Abraham Lincoln, is yet alive. The story is a most remarkable one and there are connections which makes it not only corroborate with historical data, but finds ample indorsement.

"Prior to his advent in the interesting part of American history Ritter's life is a long and interesting story. It is cut to an outline, but it is sufficient to know that his grandfather was made a German nobleman in the first part of the century for great valor when Napoleon's star was in the zenith. His father, however, was exiled for being a member of a revolutionary society known as the Sons of Freedom, but was later restored to his estates and royalty through the kind graces of Princess Olga of Russia, who was then in the pupil of King Wilhelm's eye. Young Ritter was raised in the German military service and after a long series of incidents met John Wilkes Booth in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1862, when he was then 18 years of age. There Ritter fell in love with a concert singer, Miss Enoth, whose father, together with Carl Schurz and a man who later became prominent in Illinois politics, had been banished with his father from the German empire for being identified with the Order of the Sons of Freedom. Booth was there under an assumed name and in the interest of the confederate states. He fell in love with Miss Enoth's sister and he and young Ritter became inseparable. Booth revealed to young Ritter a glorious picture of the fight of the south against the north and finally revealed his identity to the young German.

RITTER AS A CONFEDERATE OFFICER.

"Being a master of military instruction, Ritter became wildly infatuated with the idea of accompanying Booth home, and laid the matter before his father, but the latter had just returned from his exile to the United States and he was a northern man at heart. He forbade his son to leave Germany, but the latter finally succeeded in getting a passport through another name and shipped to Baltimore and was there met by Booth, who took him to Cincinnati and then to Lexington, where he enlisted in the confederate army and was made an officer. He was wounded in the south three months afterward and returned later to Germany

to get \$12,000 which his mother had left him. He returned to Baltimore and landed there March 9, 1865, just thirty-five days prior to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. He was met by his companion, Booth, who was playing there at the time. He accompanied Booth to Washington, arriving there on the 3d of April.

He was then taken by Booth into the third story of the old Pacific hotel and into the rooms which were the quarters of the Knights of the Golden Circle. There he met many notable persons, among them, he says, Edwin Booth. On the 10th he became a member of the Golden Circle by special dispensation, though he was then six months under age. He was conducted through by John Wilkes Booth and it was the custom for the two thus affiliated to be joined together by a special vow as "Jonathan" and "David," and with daggers at hearts were sworn to stand by each other under any and all circumstances for a period of thirty years, as well as to fulfill all obligations to the order. Ritter soon found that there was a circle within this circle, and the next night he was asked to join it, it being explained that the purpose of this order was to kidnap the president and take him to an old chateau out of Washington, then used as a resort, and to later take him out to sea until legislative enactment was forced through insuring the payment for all negroes to be set free. Ritter refused to go into this, although he was assured that Booth was one of the leaders. This proposition was made to him by Dave Herrold, who was executed for his part in the assassination of the president.

NIGHT OF LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION.

"At 6 o'clock on the night of the 14th Booth and Ritter were together in the Pacific hotel. Booth asked him to go down to "The Dagos," a place well known, and get an oyster stew with him. While there Booth said to him that it was very probable that he would want to start very soon for Brazil to see "those girls of theirs," the two Miss Enoths having joined their exiled father in Brazil. He asked Ritter if he would go with him, and the latter replied, "Yes, I guess." When leaving the place Booth said to him: "Ritter, I will probably want some money tonight - a great deal - can I have it?" Ritter thought it was for poker, for he had made him several loans for that purpose, and at one time Booth owed him \$1,500 and had paid him. He assured him he could have all he wanted at the asking.

Booth seemed relieved. He was about to leave for the theater, where he was to take part in a benefit for Laura Deming that night, when he came closer to Ritter and said: "I wish you would be sure to be at the rooms tonight at 10 o'clock." Robert E. Stinton then joined Booth, and the two went to the theater. In Stinton's pocket at that moment was the revolver with which Booth killed Lincoln. Ritter went to the Golden Eagle rooms and got in a game of sixty-six. He was a winner and got up from the table ^{at} five minutes of 10. He went to the window and, hearing a great noise on the street, lifted it ^{the window} and heard that Lincoln had been murdered. He closed it and sat down to wait for Booth.

The 10 o'clock passed and the hands were just at five minutes after 10 when the door flew open and John Wilkes Booth stood in the entrance. "Men," he said, "I have killed Lincoln. I have this night done a great deed for humanity," and, turning to Ritter he said: "David, will you stay with me." The terrible oath administered a few nights previous loomed up before Ritter in a new and awful light. Stepping to his side, Ritter said as he gave him his hand, "I will." "Then go," said Booth, "to Kilb & Fox's stable and get three horses, and be sure to get Flaxie, and bring them to the rear of the dago's."

"Fifteen minutes later the horses were there and Booth came out of hiding. He had Robert E. Stinton with him and the three went into a room where the clothing of three plasterers was laying. They removed their own and donned these. They then started for Dr. Mudd's, a well-known confederate sympathizer, whose place was south of Washington on the "underground route." Booth suffered greatly from his ankle. They came to two roads branching off and, the night being dark, they took the wrong one of these by mistake. They went many miles before they found they were lost, but were finally directed to Thomas Jones' house. Jones was one of Mudd's overseers. Here they stayed for several days. Secret service was opened up between this point and Washington and Booth was kept closely in touch with what was going on. Two of those messengers were Edward Fox and Dave Herrold.

HOW BOOTH ESCAPED.

"Booth was greatly worried over having left his discarded suit in Washington. It contained papers which would incriminate many others and which were also of the greatest necessity to him. It was arranged that Fox and Harrold were to don the clothes—the former

Booth's and the latter Ritter's - and were to meet them on the morning of the 23rd at Richter's barn, eighteen miles distant, it becoming apparent that the Jones house was not ^{longer} altogether safe any longer.

"At dusk on the night of the 22d Jones and Ritter put Booth on a horse and made way to the ferry where they were forced to abandon the animal. They were then fourteen miles from the barn. It had been raining and the ground was very muddy - the mud very sticky - and although the two almost carried Booth, mud accumulated on his shoes so as to draw the half-mended bones out of place and made them very painful. When eight miles away they sought refuge in an old hut, known as Elizabeth's hut. Ritter dressed ^{Booth's} his wounds. The next morning a man whom Ritter did not know entered the hut and said: "Booth, you are a dead man - you was killed at Richter's two hours ago." It was then explained that Fox and Harrold had arrived at the barn in the clothes of Booth and Ritter. Fox's horse had kicked him and he was lame. Harrold helped him to the barn and they were seen to enter. The rest is known as told in the death of John Wilkes Booth.

Fox and Booth were remarkably alike in appearance, the former even having a scar on his neck like the one on Booth's neck. He ^{wore} had on Booth's clothes and looked every inch like him. The \$75,000 reward hastened the trial, the remains were interred, and Booth was dead to the world. Booth swore the man to secrecy and he left the cottage, or hut, immediately. They rested there for several days, until Booth's leg was again healed. On May 6 they sailed out of the port of Philadelphia, bound for South America. Off of Trinidad the boat took fire and was run ashore. From there they went over-land to the Amazon, thence up the Amazon and then by rail and overland landed at Para, where they were met by Andrew Enoth, the German exile, and his daughters. Two days later Ritter was married, and Booth, recovering from his injury late in the fall, was also married, to the sister. Today, says Ritter, John Wilkes Booth is Enos, the great South American actor. Enos is taken from Enoth, the wife's name. Ritter's wife was killed in a runaway and a few years ago he returned to the United States. He landed in Anderson three months ago.

RITTER'S STORY CORROBORATED

Such is the story, but the corroboration of it is as interesting. It will be remembered that Lewis J. Welchman, a student, who lived at the Surratt home in Washington, was

the man who gave the testimony which sent the Surratts, Harrold, Paine and others to the gallows. Welchman disappeared shortly afterward and has not been heard of since. He is now Professor Welchman of the Anderson Normal University. Among ^{those} ~~the~~ people whom Ritter met in Washington was Welchman. An intimacy sprang up between them. A month ago Ritter entered a restaurant in this city. He was turning to go out, when he heard a man speak. He had not heard that voice for thirty-one years, but he turned and looked at the speaker. He then went up to him and, extending his hand, said: "How do you do, Weichman?" The latter looked up and said: "I believe I do not know you." "Well, look at this, then," and saying this he unbuttoned his coat and with his thumb nail flipped up a triangular watch charm. Weichman's face showed excitement. "Are you Ritterspur?" "No, my name is Ritter now." The next day they met and in private went over the strange case. The watch charm was a peculiar one. It had Greek letters on one side and was a gift from Booth. It was through this channel that the story now reaches the public.

There is another incident which has connection with the case. Booth had a mistress when in Washington. She was the daughter of a senator. Thirty-five days after Booth left Washington she gave birth to a child. Later she was married to Stinton. Booth sent her \$800 a year as an allowance to the child. Her husband died. This money was put on deposit in the Cincinnati Savings bank. Later she again married. In a brown-stone front in Brooklyn lives a widow. Her husband learned the secret of her birth. She is the daughter of John Wilkes Booth. After Stinton's death the \$800 from Booth to her mother had been paid annually by Ritter. His days on earth are numbered. What the future of this complication may be no one knows.

"This story was published some years ago in a Syracuse, New York, paper, about as related here, but not in detail. Ritter was then thought to be insane for making such statements, and he was not believed. By the accidental meeting of two great principals in the great tragedy in this city, together with the circumstances which have afterward placed Ritter so near death's door, the story has been given new life, and is here considered the very best of indorsement by one so true and reliable as Weichman."

Weichman, however, was not as corroborative as the above story would lead one to believe. According to an Anderson Special Dispatch of February 2nd to the Cincinnati

Enquirer (Published in that paper Feb. 3, 1897) Weichman in his turn came out with a statement denying the truth of the story given out by Ritter.

"Mr. Weichman" claimed the Enquirer, "makes a very concise and complete statement in writing, showing how it was impossible that Booth's identification was not complete. He relates several of his personal experiences, and also the expert testimony at the trial, and his statement is convincing. Ritter, on the other hand, says that he will produce letters and papers which will prove beyond all doubt that John Wilkes Booth is alive, and is today in Brazil."

And we have the story of Booth's escape as told to George Justis Mason by Dan Byrnes, ^{an octogenarian} ~~nearly eighty years of age.~~ ^{It was claimed in this yarn} ~~This was published in The Daily Times Herald, Dallas, Texas, August 9, 1925.~~

^{that} Byrnes ~~claimed that~~ at the time of the assassination ~~he~~ had recently returned to his home ~~which was~~ in Washington, not so "very far from the Booths and the Surats." ^{Byrnes} ~~He~~ also ^{according to the story} claims that he "knew them all, as well as other members of the band that decided to wipe out the entire cabinet." Since the Booths did not have a home in Washington it would appear that the narrator is slightly ^{meddled}. Of course, Mr Byrnes was at Ford's Theater on the night of the assassination and saw the whole thing. Only this witness says "Booth before he shot Lincoln was "recognized by several people as he strode quickly across the stage and over near the President's box" and "after the fatal shot, Booth ran across the stage and effected his escape by leaping to an awning and then to the cobbled pavement below, breaking his leg in the leap to the pavement."

"I never have believed that Booth was captured," declares Mr Byrnes and adds "why they never allowed any one who knew Booth-not even his own relatives- to view the remains has always baffled me, unless it was that Government agents knew the wrong man had been killed, then burned the body into a crisp by destroying the barn in which he was captured to hide their error." Mr Byrnes conclusion is that Booth sent another man along with Herold into Virginia who was killed instead of him. ^{Is} ~~I hardly believe that comment on this story is necessary.~~

next 18/2

1812
One of the earliest and most definite and persistent of all the rumors that went the rounds claiming that the assassin of Abraham Lincoln did not die on the Garrett front porch was that which may be called the Armstrong Myth. According to this version John Wilkes Booth had lived for years at Atlanta, Georgia, "not as a recluse, not as a skulking wretch stealing out at night in the shadow of a nation's curse, but as a clergyman of the Episcopal church, and in the open light of day."

There lived at Atlanta, Georgia, the Rev. J. G. Armstrong, rector of a local Episcopal church. He bore a superficial resemblance to the actor, John Wilkes Booth. By degrees the rumor grew, supported by his power of dramatic preaching, that the clergyman really was Lincoln's escaped assassin.

A writer in the Atlanta Constitution July 30, 1893, commenting on the Armstrong Double, says that he will remain the mythical John Wilkes Booth to hundreds of ^{persons} people in and about Atlanta, who knew him personally, ~~cannot be denied~~. You have only to ask them about it ^{this writer states} and they will say plainly that "Armstrong was Booth as surely as I am myself?" They believe it and will name to you the proofs - the marvelous family features, the lameness of the leg, the scars on the neck, the score of smaller particulars of poses, accents, penchants, likes and dislikes, foibles, etc., which are to them proofs strong as holy writ. And one thing may be mentioned, that is remarkable -- that is, if you will compare the newspaper cuts of Dr Armstrong with those of Edwin Booth, I venture to say that the resemblance will be so striking that if the cuts are not identified with the proper names under them not two out of ten readers will be able to positively say which represents Booth and which Armstrong."

Dr. Armstrong knew of the facial resemblance, was rather vain of his dramatic powers, and did not discourage the belief to live that he was the actor-assassin. Dr. Armstrong's taste was for the stage rather than the ministry, he took a deep interest in amateur theatricals, and his favorite plays were Shakespearean. It is said that once when Edwin Booth visited Atlanta, Dr. Armstrong occupied a stage box in the Opera House, and that Edwin Booth was so startled by Dr. Armstrong's likeness to his brother that he sought out the clergyman after the performance.

Sam Small, the writer for the Atlanta Constitution quoted above (July 30, 1893) stated in the course of his story, "But an episode that puzzles the few parties cognized of it is the secret interview that was held between Edwin Booth and Dr. Armstrong, on the occasion, I think it was, of Booth's last visit to Atlanta. I had the fact from the gentleman, whose personality and integrity are too well known in Atlanta to require a question of his veracity, that Dr. Armstrong requested him to let him (Armstrong) meet a friend for an important private interview in the study of the gentleman's residence. The permission was granted, the gentleman's family was sent visiting for the afternoon and the gentleman and Dr. Armstrong awaited the coming of the stranger, who arrived in a closed carriage at the appointed hour. This stranger was instantly recognized as Edwin Booth. He and Dr. Armstrong retired to the study and shut themselves in for two hours. The gentleman himself remained out of sight, preventing purposely the need of an introduction to Mr. Booth, and when the latter had departed, Dr. Armstrong thanked the gentleman, with deep emotion, for his kindness, and said simply this concerning the interview:

"I take it for granted that you recognized the gentleman who was with me, and I beg you to never mention this matter to any person while we both are alive."

"The gentleman made the promise, of course, but to this day he does not know whether Dr. Armstrong meant by "we both" to indicate himself and the gentleman, or himself and Edwin Booth. At any rate he told me the above facts since the death of Dr. Armstrong, and I need only add in this connection that it would take the testimony of three persons risen from the dead - John Wilkes Booth, Edwin Booth and Dr.

Armstrong - to convince my friend that Armstrong was not John Wilkes Booth."

The Memphis Commercial Appeal March 26, 1922, brought up the discussion as to Dr. Armstrong and received many letters from persons who believed the story. One letter stated:

"It is well known by many people still living in Richmond, Virginia, that John Wilkes Booth preached during the '80s for five years or more at Monumental Episcopal Church under the name of Dr. Armstrong and afterward had a church in Atlanta, Georgia, and died a natural death during the '90s." *(Memphis Commercial Appeal March 28, 1922)*

Another reads:

"About twenty-five years ago, I read in a newspaper, The New York World, I think - an article from a man who some years previously had visited a western city, I cannot recall his name, but there was no effort at concealment, and he wrote with every indication of candor and veracity.

"One night he attended church. The minister's name he was informed, was 'Dr. Armstrong.' When the minister rose to begin the service our narrator was immediately impressed with the peculiar familiarity of his voice and manner, but could not recall any specific occasion on which he had seen 'Dr. Armstrong' before.

"In the course of the sermon, however, 'Dr. Armstrong' began to recite 'The Siege of Corinth.' As the recitation proceeded with great dramatic skill and power, the listener at once remembered that some years previously he had crossed the Atlantic on a ship that carried an unusually large number of distinguished and interesting passengers, among whom was John Wilkes Booth and some of his theatrical friends.

"On several occasions during the voyage, Booth entertained the ship's company with dramatic performances and once recited 'The Siege of Corinth,' with startling power and effect.

"So when 'Dr. Armstrong' launched into the recitation, the hearer immediately recognized the tone and manner of Booth and was filled with astonishment, but thought it best not to mention the matter.

"Some nights after this he found opportunity to call on 'Dr. Armstrong' at home. He was ushered into the sitting room with the explanation that 'Dr. Armstrong' was engaged with some one in the study and asked that he await his coming. Some sub-conscious curiosity prompted him to sit where he could see the door to the study. He waited long and patiently, for he was determined to see 'Dr. Armstrong.'

"Finally the door to the study opened and 'Dr. Armstrong' and Edwin Booth came out into the hall. Edwin took affectionate and brotherly leave of 'Dr. Armstrong,' and quietly passed out. 'Dr. Armstrong' then came into the sitting room. He had a slight limp as of one who had suffered a broken ankle, and the writer satisfied himself that he was not mistaken as to 'Dr. Armstrong's' identity, but made no mention of having received any information to this effect from 'Dr. Armstrong' himself." *(Appeal April 27, 1922)*

A third says:- "I would like to answer the question, 'Was the Rev. Dr. Armstrong and John Wilkes Booth, one and the same person?' by saying that I believe I knew John Wilkes Booth in the person of the 'Rev. J. G. Armstrong,' of the Episcopal Church in Atlanta, Georgia, and I further believe that my readers will agree with the assertion when they shall have finished this article, which, I shall recount as nearly as possible, at this late date, for it occurred many, many years ago, when I was quite a young man. I was a resident of Atlanta at the time, and held a position on the Atlanta Constitution and knew the 'Rev. J. G. Armstrong' very well. He was a very brilliant man, highly educated, and it was said of him that he was the possessor of the finest private library in the city.

"As well as I remember, he was a tall, 'rawboned,' sallow complexioned man, with features as clear-cut as a cameo, with a limp on the left leg, I believe. His hair was long, falling almost to his shoulders and as black as a raven's wing. I used to wonder why he did not have it cut, but I learned later that he wore it in that manner to hide a disfiguring scar on the back of his neck. That was 'J. G. Armstrong,' or John Wilkes Booth, as I knew him.

"Now for the startling story!

"One day an old man, a stranger in the city, was standing in the main

entrance of the Kimball House, on North Pryor Street, when the Rev. J. G. Armstrong passed. He took one glance at the tall, limping figure, threw both hands above his head and exclaimed:

"John Wilkes Booth, as I live!"

"With this exclamation, he staggered and would have fallen, but for the assistance of two men, who helped him to a seat in the lobby. Soon recovering, he asked one of the men who the man was. 'That is Rev. J. G. Armstrong, of the Episcopal Church,' he was answered.

"'That may be the name he goes by here, but his real name is John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln,' he replied, and no amount of reassurance could shake his opinion.

"The story got into the papers, of course, and was played up in a more or less humorous vein and after the usual nine days, wonder was forgotten." *(Appeal, April 2, 1922)*

It is claimed that the Reverend Armstrong on several occasions confessed that he was John Wilkes Booth and there is no doubt but that he enjoyed the notoriety he received as a result of the resemblance. Dr. Armstrong died in 1891. The story given to the newspapers by his physician was that the cause of death was apoplexy. Stories were later published to the effect that it was due to an overdose of morphine.

In his July 30th, 1893, story in the Atlanta Constitution to which we have already referred, Sam Small says that he did some investigating and learned definitely that "Armstrong was not Booth." *(note a)*

"Several years ago" wrote Mr. Small, "before the death of Dr. Armstrong, I was engaged in a camp meeting at Plattsburg, Mo. The Presbyterian pastor there is, or was, a Rev. Mr. Hughes. He told me all about his school boy days with Dr. Armstrong in Ohio and of their subsequent careers in the ministry. Hughes became an Episcopalian priest and, having some trouble in that communion, retired from it to become a Presbyterian minister. Armstrong became a Presbyterian minister, and, having some trouble in that communion, retired from it to become an Episcopalian priest. I told Dr. Armstrong of my meeting with Mr. Hughes and delivered the messages sent by the other and Dr. Armstrong confirmed all that Hughes had said.

"I afterwards fully verified the facts by the mouths of witnesses in Sidney, O., in St. Louis and in Wheeling, W. Virginia."

The Armstrong Myth spread until it was finally and thoroughly investigated by the New York Herald, which carried the following story in the issue of April 26, 1903:

"When Dr. Armstrong died a record of his life was made public. According to it he was born at Ballymena, Ireland, on July 24, 1828, and was educated at Queen's College, Belfast, under the direction of his uncle, the famous James Glasgow, D.D., after whom he was named. He came to America in 1856, and prepared for the Presbyterian ministry in 1857 and 1858 at Xenia College, Ohio. His first charge was at Sidney, Ohio, where he married Miss Alma Hitchcock. She is still living in Atlanta, Georgia.

"From Sidney he moved to St. Louis in 1863, where he had trouble with the Presbyterian church and resigned to become an Episcopal minister. He attended St. Paul's Episcopal College and worked his way through as instructor in Hebrew and metaphysics in 1870, and was ordained as an Episcopal minister by Bishop C. F. Robertson at St. Paul's Church, Palmyra, Missouri, in 1871.

"From Palmyra he moved to Hannibal, Missouri, in 1871 to 1874; then to Wheeling, West Virginia, from 1878 to 1884; then to Atlanta, Georgia, from 1884 to 1888, where he again had trouble with his bishops. He gave up the ministry and lectured from 1888 until 1891, when he died suddenly.

"It is necessary to prove his career only prior to 1865, the year in which Lincoln was killed, to show that Dr. Armstrong was affecting a pose in permitting the rumors about him to be circulated. And a telegram to any one of the places mentioned in the above history would be sufficient. The following comes from the Rev. Dr. William G. Moorehead, president of Xenia College, where Dr. Armstrong, according to his record, prepared for the Presbyterian ministry in 1857, eight years before Lincoln died. Dr. Moorehead knew Dr. Armstrong in 1862, and speaks of his resemblance to Booth.

"I find in the records here," he says, "that James G. Armstrong was a native of Ireland, born at Ballymean in 1828; that he graduated from Queen's College, Belfast; studied theology in the Xenia Theological Seminary; was licensed to preach in 1859;

settled at Sidney, Ohio, 1859; removed to St Louis in 1863, and was afterward connected with the Protestant Episcopal church and settled at Wheeling, West Virginia. He was rector of one or more churches in the South, the last being at Atlanta, Georgia, I think, where he died some years ago. He married in Sidney, Ohio. He was somewhat lame, walked with a cane, but had a very handsome and attractive face. He so closely resembled John Wilkes Booth that he was actually mistaken for the actor, and one or more papers of the country some years ago confounded him with Booth. He was gifted as an orator, clear and keen of intellect, but erratic and opinionated, as I knew in 1862. Whatever became of his family I do not know.'

"All of which proves conclusively that the Rev. Dr. Armstrong lived in the western part of Ohio at the same time that J. Wilkes Booth was living at Baltimore and Washington. There is, therefore, only one supposition remaining, and that is that the Rev. Dr. James Glasgow Armstrong was the Rev. Dr. James Glasgow Armstrong and not J. Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln."

The last and most elaborate Booth myth, the one which has caused the recent magazine and newspaper interest, owed its existence largely to the work of Finis L. Bates, a lawyer of Memphis, Tennessee, who wrote a book of 309 pages, first published in 1907, and ^{claimed ownership of} owned the mummified body which was exhibited in southern and southwestern towns as that of John Wilkes Booth. Mr. Bates claimed to me ^{in 1920} that more than seventy-five thousand copies of the book ^{is had} have been sold, and due to the astounding claims and accusations it contains, purchasers of the book are led to feel that they have made a discovery in concealed history. And as few of its readers have any opportunity to check the claims and "definite proof" so positively stated, the story ^{has} succeeded in gaining numerous believers. ^{A novel and another book based on this} ^{of the Bates book} have been published within the past four ^{years}

The title sheet ^{of the Bates book} is an elaborate affair, which sets forth the thesis the author hopes to sustain.

The results of a thorough investigation of Mr. Bates' claims are set forth in the two succeeding chapters.

note 22a

note Page 22

In a letter from Chattanooga, Tennessee, May 22, 1922, Mr. J. T. Russell, who made an investigation of the Armstrong story for the author, called on Mr. Thomas C. Thompson, an ex-Mayor of that city, who the report states

Mr. Thompson seemed well versed in connection with the history of Booth and stated he was a member of St. Philipps Church in Atlanta when Dr. Armstrong (supposedly Booth) came from the Monumental Church at Richmond, Va., and claims he heard a great many of the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Court appointed by Bishop Beckwith to hold trial on the charge of immorality which if found guilty would suspend Dr. Armstrong from ministry. He states that Dr. Armstrong ^{had} done everything in his power to lend color to the suspicion that he was John Wilkes Booth which he thought was a very shrewd move on his part as he was very largely drawing attention from the main points in history of the old Booth story.

" Mr. Thompson recalled a very dramatic and intense moment at which the Rev. Dr. Strong of Savannah, Ga., (the presiding Judge of the Ecclesiastical Court) asked Dr. Armstrong the direct question "Are you John Wilkes Booth?" he replied "I am not being tried for that, sir."

" He states the case was ably tried except that there was much evidence that was mere hearsay, although he recalled the fact that Dr. Armstrong always very carefully evaded any question involving his life between the years 1862 and 1866, for example; He denied that he had ever been a Presbyterian Minister in charge of a church at Peoria, Ill. In 1862 that he was deposed from the Presbyterian Ministry for drunkenness. Witnesses from Peoria, however, identified him as the same man. He denied being able to recall when and in what year his daughter Marian was born, her birth was afterwards known to have been in 1862.

" Mr. Thompson further stated that friends of Bishop Beckwith gathered much data to prove that Armstrong was Booth and said he had the privilege of seeing much of this and having Bishop Beckwith point out to him the weak links

in the chain, some of this data, he states was most conclusive but there was always one link weak enough to prevent the whole story holding together.

" Mr. Thompson said Rev. Pettis of whom mention is made, became fully convinced that Armstrong and Booth were one, and that he had a story from an Episcopal Minister who died at Jackson, Tennessee, some years ago and whose name he did not know, of a meeting with Booth in 1859 on the way from Norfolk, Va., to N. Y. and in 1866 or 1867 meeting the same man as Armstrong a Candidate for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church in the state of Mo. It was probably on this evidence that the Rev. Pettis based his strong opinion that Booth and Armstrong were one.

" Mr. Thompson further states that Ex. Gov. Rufus Bullock was one of Dr. Armstrong's loyal friends, and that on one occasion when Edwin Booth was visiting Atlanta, Dr. Armstrong asked for the use of Gov. Bullock's parlor to entertain a guest whom he did not care to carry to his small apartment, then in the Baltimore Block, in Atlanta, and Mr. Thompson says Gov. Bullock stated most positively that on this particular occasion Dr. Armstrong and Edwin Booth came into his home about 12:00 o'clock, and remained in the front parlor with the doors closed until after daylight next morning. #

" If Mr. Ethridge can get a copy of Rev. Pettis's works on the Booth case he will forward same immediately.

"³₁ Trusting this information obtained from Mr. Thompson will be of some value as he states these are facts he positively knows *due to the fact that he was* by being in Atlanta while this took place."

~~Very truly yours,~~

~~James T. Russell.~~