

THE PURSUIT

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Chapter 8

Ch 8

THE PURSUIT.

The excitement in Washington, beginning the night of the assassination, continued unabated the next morning. "Groups of people" one of the newspapers reported, "were to be seen congregated in every hotel and on every street corner, listening to the version of some one who considered himself fortunate in having been an eye-witness to the murder. For a time, the excited and exasperated mass surged rapidly from point to point as if burning to execute their vengeance upon someone connected with the affair, and the reign of mob violence was seriously apprehended..... The houses of prominent and well-known Confederate sympathizers were noticeable for the 'display of crape, which was hung out only to shield them from the vengeance of the embryo mob. Frequent rushes were made for every person seen on the streets under guard."

That afternoon General Payne, a Confederate officer, and his two Adjutants, and an orderly, who had been captured in Virginia the day before, were brought to Washington. As they passed through the city, thousands of excited men and boys followed them, evidently supposing that they had been connected with the assassination. Many cried, "Hang them, hang them!" (1)

Secretary of War Stanton, having determined to procure the services of the best sleuths in the country, on the day after the assassination, among others wired Colonel (later General) L.C. Baker, Chief of the Federal Secret Service: "Come here immediately and see if you can find the murderer of the President." (2)

General Baker for some weeks previous to the assassination had been on duty in New York, engaged in making investigations with reference to frauds committed in the recruiting service. (3) <sup>He</sup> General Baker rushed from New York accompanied by <sup>his cousin,</sup> Lieutenant L.B. Baker, a former cavalry officer, now also of the Secret Service. (4)

General Baker upon his arrival in Washington, secured pictures of Booth, Herold and John Surratt and on Monday, April the 17th, had copies made of them, with a full and accurate description of the assassins printed in a circular. The photo-

graphs and descriptions were dispatched to a number of detectives in all parts of the country. General Baker states in his "History of the Secret Service," <sup>that</sup> "At this time it was almost impossible to obtain any information of a reliable character; the unparalleled atrocity of this terrible event, and the fact that the assassins had for the time being escaped, had seemingly paralyzed the entire community." The <sup>from</sup> detective forces of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and other cities also had reported in Washington for duty. On Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, or Tuesday ~~the~~ 19<sup>th</sup>, General Baker sent six men of his force under the direction of Lieutenant Baker, into lower Maryland, to distribute the <sup>descriptive</sup> circulars and look for clues. After being absent four or five days, they returned, unsuccessful, toward the end of the week succeeding the assassination. (5)

At the same time, under the direction of Major-General C.C. Augur, infantry, <sup>and</sup> cavalry ~~and detectives~~ had been sent into lower Maryland. Detectives under Lieutenant Alexander Lovett, after calling several times at the home of Dr. <sup>Samuel</sup> Mudd, obtained the story of Booth's and Herold's stay there. (6) This was the first positive trace the pursuers had that they were really close upon <sup>the</sup> Booth <sup>Assassins</sup> and Herold, and that they actually had gone on South after crossing the Eastern Branch bridge. Another detective party under Major James R. O'Beirne went down the Potomac to Port Tobacco on the eighteenth, and meeting Major John M. Waite, of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry, they decided to explore the Zekiah Swamps, described so graphically by Major O'Beirne: "The swamps tributary to the various branches of the Wicomico River, of which the chief feeder is Allen's Creek, bear various names, such as Jordan's Swamp, Atchall's Swamp, and Scrub Swamp. These are dense growths of dogwood, gum and beech, planted in sluices of water and bog. Frequent deep ponds dot this wilderness place, with here and there a stretch of dry soil, but no human being inhabits the malarious expanse; even a hunted murderer would shrink from hiding there. Serpents and slimy lizards are the only living denizens. Not even the hunted Negro dared to fathom the treacherous clay." (7)

<sup>Pursuers</sup>  
Cavalrymen, policemen, and detectives by the hundred were now scouring

the whole territory of Southern Maryland. They were treading on each others' heels, and mixing up the thing so badly, that the best place for the culprits was in the very midst of their pursuers. (8)

The large reward had indeed stimulated the search. Several old folks in <sup>the</sup> that section of ~~Maryland~~, whose memories go back to that period, have described to the author the almost intolerable situation for the inhabitants. Every few minutes during the day and night, a new set of cavalrymen, policemen or detectives would be demanding admittance to the homes and questioning the inmates. They worked in small groups and any information obtained was purposely garbled when told to another party, so as to throw them off the scent. Each searching party feared to give leads which might aid others in finding the assassins and obtaining the reward.

On Monday, the seventeenth, it was announced that there had been a number of arrests made of persons supposed to know of, or to have been connected with the assassination. "Sufficient evidence has been adduced," it was stated, "to settle the fact that it is an old plot just attempted to be executed, that it was far wider in its contemplated results, but that the two assassins were the only ones who came to time." (9)

Of those arrested and brought to Washington during the forenoon of the 17th, were several prisoners from Prince George's County, Maryland. As they were being taken to the Old Capitol Prison, according to the Press dispatches: "a large crowd followed, increasing in numbers at every corner, although as a precautionary measure the route taken was down the back streets. The crowd was a motley one, of all ages and colors." The report that the parties were Booth and Surratt gain<sup>ed</sup> credit, <sup>and</sup> the cry was raised "hang them", "kill them", and at the same time the prisoners and their guards were attacked with stones. (10)

The mob spirit became so rampant that it was deemed advisable to announce that, "Every precau<sup>tion</sup> has been taken by the War Department, to prevent the sweeping tempest of indignation and horror from assuming any retaliatory character."

It became rumored that Booth held a Commission in the Confederate Army as a lieutenant-colonel and of course this did not help the precarious position of paroled Confederate officers in Washington. (11) <sup>The Capitol City</sup> Washington was in the grip of rumors. The Secretary of War wrote General Hancock at Winchester, Virginia, on Wednesday the 19th: "There is evidence that Mosby knew of Booth's plan, and was here in this city with him; also that some of the gang are endeavoring to escape by crossing the upper Potomac to get with Mosby or the secesh there. Atzerodt, or Port Tobacco, as he is called, is known to have gone to Rockville Saturday to escape in that direction." (12)

It was not until late Monday night, however, that any important arrests were made. Then Lewis Payne was captured.

The War Department was informed of the intimacy existing between Booth and the Surratts and a party under the command of Major H.W. Smith went to the "H" Street home of Mrs. Surratt to arrest the inmates and search the house. While waiting about midnight for a carriage to convey the women prisoners to General Augur's headquarters, the officers heard footsteps at the front of the house and then a ring at an outer door. When they opened it a large man with a pick-axe over his shoulder confronted them. He was bidden to enter and rapidly did so when a pistol was pointed at his head. Then one of the officers quickly closed the door. The man, discovered <sup>ing</sup> that something was ~~wrong~~ <sup>amiss</sup> evidently, turned and said that he had made a mistake - was in the wrong house. "Who did you wish to see?" he was asked. "I came to see Mrs. Surratt," was his answer. "Well, you are right then - she lives here," one of the officers replied.

When questioned as to his reasons for calling so late, the man said that he had come to dig a gutter, that Mrs. Surratt had sent for him that morning and that he had called to find out what time he should go to work the next day. To identify himself he produced an oath of Allegiance made out to "Lewis Payne, Fauquier County, Virginia."

Mrs. Surratt was called from the parlor and asked: "Do you know this man and did you hire him to come and dig a gutter for you?" She answered, raising her right hand, "Before God, sir, I do not know this man and have never seen him, and I did not hire him to dig a gutter for me."

Then according to the story told by one of the officers, Payne, when asked where he lived, boggled a little and when asked where he slept the night before, said, "Down to the railroad." When asked where the night before that and Friday, he was "still more embarrassed, and equivocated considerably."

His boots and clothes were terribly muddy. When his hat, which attracted attention, was examined, it was found to have been made of a fine gray or mixed undershirt of his own, cut out in Confederate soldier style, and not sewed up but pinned. This led to the conviction that he had lost his hat, and since the man who had attacked Secretary Seward had left his hat at the Seward home, this and other circumstances fixed suspicion that he was the would-be assassin. He was sent to headquarters and about three o'clock in the morning, William Bell, the Secretary's colored doorkeeper, was sent for without the knowledge of what was wanted. He entered the room at military headquarters and was seated, the gas previously having been turned down. Then the gas was turned on brightly, and "without a word being spoken, the poor boy started as if he had been shot and the pseudo laborer started also and turned deadly pale. The recognition was instantaneous and mutual. On being asked why he seemed so affected, the negro immediately answered: 'Why, dat's the man wot cut Massa Seward' and moving for a moment uneasily and with his eyes intently fixed on the prisoner, he continued: 'I don't want to stay here, no how.' " (13)

The search of the Surratt home also produced a card painted in colors with the arms of Virginia, and two Confederate flags having the inscription "Thus will it ever be with tyrants." "Virginia the Mighty." "Sic Semper Tyrannis".

The ~~many~~ detectives searching for clues in Washington soon learned the names of Booth's abduction plot associates. Booth had often and openly visited

*without much difficulty*

Arnold and O'Laughlin at their boarding place, (14) and Atzerodt at the Pennsylvania House. (15) He had been seen with John Surratt (16) and with David Herold. This, with the information obtained through the search of Booth's trunk and the statements made by the various parties implicated as they were arrested, soon advised the officers as to the identity of the persons at least directly connected with his plots.

Michael O'Laughlin, on Thursday the 13th, had come over with three companions from Baltimore to Washington and spent the night with them celebrating. About nine o'clock the next morning, the 14th, according to these companions, while they were passing the National Hotel, O'Laughlin left them and went up stairs to see Booth. (17) Whether he saw him and if he did what was said between them has never been learned. An attempt was made to prove that he rang the door bell of Secretary Stanton's house on the night of the assassination and then ran away, when he saw someone approaching. On the following Monday, O'Laughlin was arrested in Baltimore at the home of a friend where he had gone when he learned that the officers were looking for him. The War Department on Monday the 17th, wired J. L. McPhail, Provost-Marshal, Baltimore: "Bring M. O'Laughlin here in the train which leaves Baltimore at 6 p.m. Have him in double irons, and use every precaution against escape, but as far as possible avoid everything which can lead to suspicion on the part of the people on the train and give rise to an attempt to lynch the prisoner. A carriage will be in waiting at the depot to convey him to the place of confinement." (18)

That same day Samuel Arnold was also arrested. He had taken a position about two weeks before the assassination near Fortress Monroe. (19) The letter which he had written Booth on March 27, (20) and which had been found on the 15th in <sup>the actor's</sup> Booth's trunk was sufficient to seriously incriminate him.

Saturday night, the 15th, the room on the floor above Vice-President Johnson's at the Kirkwood, which Atzerodt had taken on the morning of the 14th, was searched and evidence found showing his connection with Booth. He had gone

so far as to take his knife and pistol to the Kirkwood and hide them under the bed. On Thursday the 20th, Atzerodt, whose probable whereabouts had been learned at Port Tobacco, was traced to the home of a cousin in Montgomery County, Maryland, arrested and brought to Washington. (21)

Edward Spangler, the theater employe who had had charge of Booth's horse, was arrested the latter part of the week. He also was suspected of having drilled the hole found in the door of the presidential box.

Of the principals in the plot, this left only two uncaptured - Booth, the mad leader, and Herold, the "trivial, trifling, cowardly boy."

Thursday the 20th, the War Department issued an order which must have caused fear and trembling in the hearts of those who <sup>had</sup> aided Booth to escape <sup>in through</sup> Southern Maryland. The order read: "All persons harboring or secreting the said persons, or other of them, or aiding or assisting their concealment or escape, will be treated as accomplices in the murder of the President and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State, and shall be subject to trial before a military commission, and the punishment of death. Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land by the arrest and punishment of the murderers." (22)

During the week following the assassination it seemed that the entire <sup>Nation</sup> country was searching for John Wilkes Booth. That he had given his own name to the guard at the Eastern Branch Bridge was proof to many that he and Herold had not followed the obvious course into Southern Maryland, but had used this as a ruse to start pursuers on the wrong scent. Dispatches were received almost hourly by the Washington press that the assassin had been apprehended in first one city, then another. Strangers who might by any possibility resemble the description of ~~John Wilkes~~ Booth, were readily identified as such by persons who had met him or seen him once or twice on the stage.

On Monday April 17th, 1865, a story was sent out from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that a man "supposed to be J. Wilkes Booth, was arrested by Provost-Marshall Coulter at Greensburg, and is held for identification" and that the Mayor



of Pittsburgh "sent on a person acquainted with Booth to identify him." Later that day, a second Pittsburgh dispatch stated, "The person arrested at Greensburg, and supposed to be Booth is trustworthily stated not to be him." (23)

In a special dispatch to the New York Tribune from Reading, Pennsylvania, Wednesday, April 19~~th~~, 1865, the startling statement was made that "Booth, the murderer," was on a train that left Reading at 6 o'clock and that "a gentleman noticed him on the train before it reached here, spoke to him and shook hands with him and that during their conversation Booth colored up several times, and appeared annoyed and desirous of avoiding observation." "The gentleman," it was stated, "is positive it is Booth, having known him for several years." (24)

Under a heading, "Movements of the Assassin," the Tribune, (25) carried a dispatch from Reading, dated the next day, which claimed that the man answering the description of and recognized as Booth had been in Reading all that day and that finally two detectives had traced to the railway station and ascertained that a man answering his description had boarded a train which had just left. A special engine was obtained from the Superintendent of the Railroad and the detectives with the man who had identified Booth proceeded at full speed to overtake the regular train. This was accomplished, but it was then learned that the man described had alighted at Auburn. ~~This~~ town was searched and wires sent broadcast with the following description of the person.

"About five feet eight inches in height, black eyes, black hair, cut short and inclined to curl; short black mustache; had cotton in both ears; wore a white felt hat; had a piece of crape on the left arm; wore a Lincoln badge on the right breast in mourning; and had on a black frock coat with common blue military pants." This description, compared with that of Booth sent out by the War Department, would lead most anyone to conclude that the assassin had been found.

That night G. A. Nicholas, Superintendent, Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, informed reporters that it was learned that the man after leaving the train at Auburn had walked back to Port Clinton after dark, and stolen passage to Tamaqua on a coal

train where he had been caught and imprisoned.

On Saturday, April 22~~nd~~, the Tribune stated that the man was "anybody but Booth." The same Saturday the Boston Advertiser carried this story:

"James L. Chapman, son of Sheriff Chapman of Pittsfield, Mass., bears so strong a resemblance to the assassin Booth that he was stopped three times while traveling on Wednesday, and made to establish his identity.

In his reminiscences of the assassination (26) Seaton Monroe, an acquaintance of John Wilkes Booth, told about a friend who was arrested on a Washington street on Saturday, the day following, <sup>the murder</sup> because of a "fancied resemblance to Booth."

"AN ACTOR ARRESTED FOR LOOKING LIKE BOOTH" was the heading of a story in the Chicago Times, April 21, which continued:

"A very singular arrest was made on Wednesday evening; one that at first caused no little excitement, but upon examination was the cause of considerable mirth and laughter. About 9 o'clock, a soldier, in breathless haste and nervous anxiety, rushed into the Central police station and told Secretary Scott that he had just seen the infamous murderer J. Wilkes Booth, on Clark street, in company with Mr. Pratt, of McVicker's Theatre. Mr. Scott at first laughed at the idea, but the soldier was positive. He said that he had once, while Booth was playing an engagement at McVickers, been an attache at the theatre, and that he knew Booth very well and was positive that he had just seen him. Mr. Scott at once asked the soldier why he had not killed him on the spot, when the soldier answered that he would have done so but he was unarmed. Still doubting, Mr. Scott went in search of the parties and soon found Mr. Pratt and the supposed villain, Booth, in a restaurant on Clark street. The companion of Mr. Pratt looked very much like the picture of the infamous assassin, which Mr. Scott had in his possession, and he exactly answered the description which the soldier had given of him. Mr. Scott requested Mr. Pratt to come over with him to the central station, as he wished to see him, and also asked him to invite his friend to accompany them. When the three arrived

at the station the stranger was informed that he was under arrest as the assassin of Mr. Lincoln. Had a thunderbolt from heaven struck him the accused could not have been more surprised. He had no difficulty, however, in convincing the officials that they were mistaken, and that he, the supposed Booth, was none other than Mr. J.F. Nagle, the accomplished leading actor at McVicker's theatre. Notwithstanding the innocence of the accused, so determined were the officials to punish all men who resembled Booth, they declared that they would and actually did bring him to his beer, when a general good time was enjoyed by all parties."

During the time of Booth's flight, a story was published that "JOHN W. BOOTH ENLISTED INTO THE ARMY FROM LANCASTER COUNTY." The details given in one of the Lancaster <sup>Pennsylvania</sup> papers were "that a man calling himself John W. Booth, and answering to the description given of the murderer of President Lincoln, had been mustered into the United States service, at that office, on the 23rd of August, 1864, and was credited to the sub-district of Fulton township. In the mustering and description book the following particulars are given: - Nativity, Kent county, Md.; age, 29 years; profession, shoemaker; color of eyes, light blue; color of hair, black; complexion, ruddy; height, 5 feet and 10 inches. He enlisted for one year, receiving a bounty of \$500, and was assigned to the 3rd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery. He was sent to camp at Philadelphia, on the 30th of the same month, since which nothing has been heard of him at our Provost Marshal's office. As everything relating to the murderer of our President is being published in the newspapers, we give this to the public for what it is worth. It is possible that the person above alluded to was the veritable John Wilkes Booth, who has lately occupied so large a share of public attention; and perhaps, after all, those persons who were so positive they saw him in Lancaster a few weeks ago, were not so much mistaken in the person as in the time they saw him." (27)

Under the heading, "A MISTAKEN ARREST OF A JERSEYMAN", appeared the following:

"Mr. John G. Stevens, a well-known citizen of Trenton, while on his way to the Pennsylvania oil regions recently, was taken prisoner by two detectives, on suspicion that he was Booth. The Trenton True American says:

'At first Mr. Stevens, who can relish a joke, thought it was a very good one, and joined with the detectives in the pleasantries incident to the accidental meeting of a jocular party. The detectives took a seat very near by Mr. Stevens, and endeavored to draw out some facts which might confirm their suspicions, but the entire ignorance of Mr. Stevens, of even the fact that he was seriously suspected, only confirmed the officers that their prisoner was a most adroit and accomplished gentleman.

" Matters passed along pleasantly until their arrival at Titusville Pa., the head of the oil regions, when the unpleasant proximity of the officers, and the crowd of policemen, convinced Mr. Stevens that his arrest was no joke. The crowd became clamorous and violent, demanding that the prisoner should be hung up at once without judge or jury. All this, as may be imagined, was very pleasant to the feelings of Mr. Stevens. They followed close upon his heels up to the hotel, and while he and the detectives were in a room, examining into the identity of Mr. Stevens, and ascertaining whether or not he was Booth, the crowd outside continued to increase in numbers, and also in ferocity, demanding that he should be brought out, in order that they might take vengeance upon him.

" The detectives soon found by the examination of Mr. Stevens' papers that he was a railroad man, from New Jersey, and was as far from being Booth, the assassin, as the Emperor of Russia, or any other man. They came out of the hotel and so informed the crowd; but this would not satisfy them, - they still demanded that he ought to be shot, and when the detectives said he belonged to the state of New Jersey, and the Camden and Amboy Railroad Company, some chap in the crowd said, 'Well, damn him - he ought to be shot anyhow.' The detectives advised Mr. Stevens that he had better appear at the window of the hotel and address the crowd. After a good deal of hesitancy, Mr. Stevens finally appeared, and in a very pleasant vein, addressed the people, and managed to get them in excellent humor."

(28)

And soon after Booth's capture this story appeared in the press:

"Our townsman, J. Allison Eyster, Esq., narrowly escaped arrest in Huntingdon last week on the suspicion that he was the veritable J. Wilkes Booth, the murderer of the President. He had gone there on a visit to his brother-in-law, Hon. John Scott, and went into a barber shop to

get shaved. He ordered the barber to shave off his moustache, which was done, and after the operation was performed Mr. Eyster walked out to the house of his relative. As soon as he left the shop, the barber declared that he was Booth; that he knew Booth well and had shaved him in the oil regions. Of course an intense excitement was aroused. The news spread through the town with lightning speed that Booth had been in the place. The hotels were all examined, but no such person had stopped at any of them, and suspicion was confirmed by the fact that the suspected individual must be secreted somewhere about the town. Mr. Eyster was not out of the house during the evening, and was therefore ignorant of the excitement he had created; and it was not until the next morning when he appeared on the street with Mr. Scott, that the blunder was discovered. Now that Booth has been captured and killed, we presume that Mr. Eyster will feel safe in venturing from home again." (29)

The Detroit Free Press of April 24th, 1865, reported that on the day before, a suspicious person supposed to have been Booth had been seen in Wyandotte, Michigan, and that Detroit people had rushed down there but could not find the man. The Sandusky, Ohio, Register of April 18th, 1865, told the story of two parties suspected of being Booth and Herold, who were arrested in Northern Ohio. In the southern part of the state a man recognized as Booth, jumped from a moving train and escaped, according to the Cincinnati Gazette of April 19th, 1865. All of which proves that there were many individuals with a superficial resemblance to the actor. It also shows the futility of depending wholly on printed descriptions and pictures for identification purposes. This was before the assassin's death and already he was being seen in various parts of the country by those "who knew him well." The Booth myths which have grown to such great proportions had started their merry rounds.

The War Department and the police were the recipients of many letters during the two weeks following the assassination, from Spiritualists, fortune tellers, clairvoyants, the sane and the insane, suggesting means by which the assassin could be captured. Some stated that the hiding place of Booth and Herold had been most definitely shown them in dreams. - A letter from Boston, dated April 18, said:

"As I am willing to do all in my power to aid in the arrest of the assassin Booth, perhaps the following may be of service to you, as I have considerable confidence in my information, which I will let you know about at some future time. Go through Mass. Avenue to 8th Street, near the market, to house No. 61, in the rear. Mrs. Caroline or Angeline Wright lives or stays there, and Booth is secreted there. He goes out in the disguise of a negro, and also did before the assassination. He hides up stairs in a concealed closet, which would be difficult to find, unless carefully looked after, as there is a slide or panel. He jumped off his horse after the crime was committed, another man taking his place, to avoid suspicion. The house may be No. 84, and may possibly be some other avenue, but on 8th street, or near the corner." (30)

In one from an Ohio town, addressed to Secretary Stanton, was the claim:

"Believing in the efficacy of prayer, and earnestly desiring that the assassin of our beloved President be brought to justice, I clearly dreamed that the assassin was in a man's house by the name of Cromwell, at Reading, Pennsylvania. I am no believer in Spiritualism or fanaticism of any kind, I am a matter-of-fact woman, but for the intelligence I prayed fervently; take it for what it is worth, but I desire that it never be made public. I feel it to be a duty to give my name, but a delicacy prevents me from so doing."

(31)

Another to Mr. Stanton, this time from Buffalo, and evidently not

the first from the writer, was as follows:

"Sir--I crave your pardon for troubling you again with what some folks call foolishness, and perhaps you have no faith in. I have called several times on the person I mentioned to you since I wrote you; she still insists that the assassin is hid in the same place where he first went, and it is not three miles from the theater; she thinks he is clothed in female attire, and is making arrangements to go off on a large boat. I think it would be well to examine every female, young or old, that wants a pass to leave the city, and especially if their destination is Europe. You are aware, I presume, that a person of his profession can adapt themselves to any disguise. Do not let your disbelief in fortune-telling prevent you from using this as a means of information to bring the assassin to justice, for I have faith to believe he is concealed in a house of that description. You will forgive me for troubling you when you know how much we loved our late President." (32)

These three letters give but a faint idea of the <sup>Crazy</sup> insane and senseless claims and suggestions received in the daily mail at the War Department. The fanatics who wrote them were loud in their denunciation of the department for not immediately acting upon their wild vagaries. It was this class of people who later started stories that the assassin altogether escaped apprehension and lived to a ripe old age.

The newspapers began to criticize the lack of results insofar as the capture of Booth and Herold were concerned. The National Republican (33) on Monday the 24th complained, "It is now ten days since the highest officer in this nation was cruelly assassinated in a public place of amusement in this city and yet the District of Columbia has not been thoroughly searched, as it should be. It strikes us that some of the energy displayed in arra<sup>ng</sup>ing the Rebel sympathizers of Southwestern Maryland as harborers of assassins might well have been devoted to a thorough overhauling of the Federal District."



*in the  
Maryland*

It was at this time that preparations were made to hunt the swamps "around Chapmantown, Bethtown, and Allen's Fresh." Booth had been entirely lost since his departure from <sup>At</sup> Mudd's house, and it was believed that he had either pushed on for the Potomac or taken to the swamps. "The officers sagaciously determined to follow him to the one, and to explore the others." (34)

George Alfred Townsend, who was following the search for a number of the newspapers, stated: "The military forces deputed to pursue the fugitives were seven hundred men of the Eighth Illinois cavalry, six hundred men of the Twenty-second Colored troops, and one hundred men of the Sixteenth New York. These swept the swamps by detachments, the mass of them, dismounted, with cavalry at the belts of clearing, interspersed with detectives at frequent intervals, in the rear. They first formed a strong picket cordon entirely around the swamps, and then, drawn up in two orders of battle, advanced boldly into the bogs by two lines of march. One party swept the swamps longitudinally, the other pushed straight across their smallest diameter.

"A similar march has not been made during the war; the soldiers were only a few paces apart, and in steady order they took the ground as it came, now plunging to their arm-pits in foul sluices of gangrened water, now hopelessly submerged in slime, now attacked by legions of wood ticks, now tempting some unfaithful log or greenish solid morass, and plunging to the tip of the skull in poison stagnation; the tree boughs rent their uniforms; they came out upon dry land, many of them without a rag of garment, scratched and gashed and spent, repugnant to themselves, and disgusting to those who saw them; but not one trace of Booth or Herold was anywhere found. Wherever they might be, the swamps did not contain them.

"While all this was going on, a force started from Point Lookout, and swept the narrow necks of Saint Mary's quite up to Medley's Neck. To complete the search in this part of the country, Colonel Wells and Major O'Bierne started with a force of cavalry and infantry for Chappel Point; they took the entire

peninsula as before, and marched in close skirmish line across it, but without finding anything of note. The matter of enclosing a house was by cavalry advances, which held all the avenues till mounted detectives came up. Many strange and ludicrous adventures occurred on each of these expeditions. While the forces were going up Cobb's Neck, there was a counter forde coming down from Allen's Fresh.

"Major O'Bierne started for Leonardstown with his detective force, and played off Laverty as Booth, and Hoey as Harold. These two advanced to farm-houses and gave their assumed names, asking at the same time for assistance and shelter. They were generally avoided, except by one man named Claggert, who told them they might hide in the woods behind his house. When Claggert was arrested, however, he stated that he meant to hide them only to give them up. While on this adventure, a man who had heard of the reward came very near shooting Laverty. The ruse now became hazardous and the detectives resumed their real characters."

"A few miles from Port Tobacco dwelt a solitary woman, who, when questioned, said that for many nights she had heard, after she had retired to bed, a man enter her cellar and lie there all night, departing before dawn. Major O'Bierne and the detectives ordered her to place a lamp in her window the next night she heard him enter, and at dark they established a cordon of armed officers around the place. At midnight punctually she exhibited the light, when the officers broke into the house and thoroughly searched it, without result. Yet the woman positively asserted that she had heard the man enter.

"It was afterward found that she was of diseased mind."

At this juncture, General Baker decided to establish a telegraph station at a point down the Potomac for the use of searching posses and on Sunday the 23rd, sent an operator and two detectives for this purpose. The same steamer which took these men down, brought back one of the detectives and a negro, who stated positively that he had seen Booth and another man on Saturday night, cross

the Potomac in a fishing boat, "while he was looking down upon them from a bank", and although <sup>Baker</sup> ~~the Colonel~~ was at first skeptical, the negro answered so readily and intelligently, recognizing Booth from photographs, that Baker felt at last he "had the true scent." (35)

According to the testimony of Lieut. L.B. Baker, (36) after talking to the negro, General Baker (then Colonel) came down "from the War Department and said: 'Lieutenant, we have got a sure thing. I think Booth has crossed the river, and I want you to go right out.' I had been out on two trips. I said, 'There are no men to go with me.' He said, 'We will have some soldiers detailed.' He sat down and immediately wrote a letter to General Hancock. Then he said, 'Is there no one in the office who can go with you?' I said, 'No one but Colonel Conger.' Colonel Conger was lame, and had not been out. Said he, 'Can he ride?' I said, 'I think he can.' I found Colonel Conger, and he said he would go."

Baker at once requested a detachment of cavalry, which was sent to him under the command of Lieutenant Edward P. Doherty, *who in telling his part of the story says that* at about the hour that Booth was dropped at the Garrett house by his new-made friends, ~~Lieutenant Doherty~~ (37) *and that* says that he was seated on a bench in Lafayette Square opposite the White House, in company with another officer of the 16th N.Y. Cavalry. While conversing there he received the following order:-

"Headquarters, Dept. of Washington.  
April 24th, 1865.

"Commanding Officer, 16th N.Y. Cavalry,

"Sir:-

"You will at once detail a reliable and discreet commissioned officer, with twenty-five men, well mounted, with three days rations and forage, to report at once to Colonel L.C. Baker, Agent of the War Department, at 211 Pennsylvania Avenue.

"By Command of General C.C. Augur,  
(Signed) J.E. Sewall, A.A.A.G."

"In accordance with the foregoing order, 1st Lieut. Edward P. Doherty,

is hereby detailed for the duty specified, and will report at once to Col. L.C. Baker, 211 Pennsylvania Ave.

"N.B. Switzer,  
"Colonel 16th N.Y. Cavalry  
"Bvt. Brig. Gen'l., U.S.A."

*Lieutenant*

He proceeded to the barracks, had "Boots and Saddles" sounded, and took the first twenty-five men in the saddle, Sergeant Boston Corbett being the only man from his own company. In less than half an hour they had reported for orders to Col. Baker, who then gave <sup>the three officers</sup> Conger, Baker and Doherty, photographs of Booth and Herold (38) and at the same time pointed out with a pencil the place on the map where Booth and Herold had crossed the Potomac according to the colored man's story, and where he, Baker, believed they would be found hidden between that river and the Rappahannock. (39)

The three officers with <sup>Sergeant Boston Corbett and</sup> ~~twenty-six~~ <sup>five</sup> men left Washington on Monday afternoon on board the steamer John S. Ide and disembarked at Belle Plain, on the border of Stafford County, Virginia, at ten o'clock that night. Belle Plain was the nearest Potomac River landing to <sup>e</sup>Fredericksburg, seventy miles south of Washington. Here the steamer made fast, while the party galloped off in the darkness in the direction of <sup>e</sup>Fredericksburg. They proceeded for about three miles, then turned to the southwest and rode continuously through the night.

Here let us leave the searching parties and again take up the efforts of Booth and Herold to escape.

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Notes

- (1) Washington, April 15, N.Y. Tribune April 17, 1865. Also O.R. Series 1, Vol. 46, Part 3, ~~P.~~772.
- (2) O.R. Series 1, Vol. 46, Part 111, ~~P.~~783
- (3) "History of the Secret Service," by Baker, ~~P.~~524.
- (4) "History of the Secret Service," by Baker, ~~P.~~526, and George Alfred Townsend's "Stories."
- (5) "History of the Secret Service," by Baker, ~~P.~~526.
- (6) C.T. ~~P.~~87.
- (7) Oldroyd, ~~P.~~67.
- (8) Baker, ~~P.~~494-495.
- (9) Washington April 17, N.Y. Tribune. ?
- (10) Washington April 17, N.Y. Tribune April 18, 1865.
- (11) Clipping, Lincoln Scrap Book, ~~P.~~67.
- (12) O.R. ~~P.~~838
- (13) Washington April 18th, N.Y. Tribune April 19, 1865 and Testimony of Major H.W. Smith, R.C. Morgan and Captain Wm. Wernerskirch. C.T. ~~P.~~121-124. Also S.T. ~~P.~~331-337, 340-351 and 485-489.
- (14) C.T. ~~P.~~22.
- (15) C.T. ~~P.~~146.
- (16) C.T. ~~P.~~72
- (17) Testimony Bernard T. Early, C.T. ~~P.~~224-226.
- (18) O.R. ~~P.~~821
- (19) C.T. ~~P.~~234-242.
- (20) C.T. ~~P.~~236.
- (21) Testimony Robert R. Jones, John Lee, Sergeant L.W. Gemmill, C.T. ~~P.~~144-149.
- (22) N.Y. Tribune, April 21, 1865.
- (23) N.Y. Tribune, April 19, 1865.
- (24) N.Y. Tribune, April 20, 1865.

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- (25) N.Y. Tribune, April 21, 1865.
- (26) North American Review, April 1896 and N.Y. Sun April 5, 1896.
- (27) Lincoln Scrap Book, P.56.
- (28) Clipping Lincoln Scrap Book, P.36.
- (29) Clipping Lincoln Scrap Book, P.36.
- (30) Baker, P.548
- (31) Baker, P.549
- (32) Baker, P.548-549
- (33) Washington D.C.
- (34) Baker, P.492 and "The Life, Crime and Capture of John Wilkes Booth"<sup>W</sup>, by George Alfred Townsend.
- (35) Baker, P.495.
- (36) Imp. Inv. P.488.
- (37) From a MSS written by Lieut. Edward P. Doherty in 1885 entitled "Panorama of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States."
- (38) Doherty's Story
- (39) Baker's "History of the Secret Service" <sup>pp 531-534</sup> (~~Also following 2 pages.~~)?