

*From the Louisville Journal 1867*  
*John Walker Booth*

He is Probably Concealed on the Island of Ceylon - Intense Excitement in Bombay, India -  
The Celebrated Privateer Bird of the Ocean Trading on that Coast - Capt. W. Martin  
Tolbert Wins Another Bet of Ten Thousand Dollars - Capt. Hunt, of the Tyrol, Pays the  
money - Letter from William A Frazer, F. R. S., of Bombay, to the Hon. Stephen Maxwell,  
S. T. P., of Havana.

(The following most extraordinary letter has been transcribed expressly for  
the Louisville Journal, by the Hon. T. Fernandez, of Havana, from the original in the  
possession of the Hon. Stephen Maxwell, Professor of Theology, who has consented to  
its publication. Prof. Maxwell was, when last heard from. Aug. 5th, 1867, at the  
Inglaterra Hotel, Havana. He is a warm personal friend of the learned writer, Prof.  
Frazer:)

Hon. Stephen Maxwell - Dear Sir:- Since your departure a strange incident  
has occurred in this city, something similar in its nature to the affair that created  
so much excitement in Calcutta some months ago, though in this case the amount at  
issued is four times greater than in the other. Having promised you that I would make  
diligent inquiry about the ship Bird of the Ocean and her commander, it luckily so  
happened that I was spared the trouble of extending my inquiries beyond this city by  
the arrival of the ship in question at this port on the 26th of March.

The "Bird of the Ocean," having become notorious, through the agency of her  
commander - the celebrated Capt. W. Martin Tolbert - in consequence of having piratically  
captured several merchant vessels on the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, as it has been  
alleged, attracted no little attention upon entering Bombay harbor. Her papers were  
subjected to a rigid examination by the Custom House authorities, but no flaw could be  
found in them, she having creditable clearance from Singapore, and a manifest, embrac-  
ing a full list of cargo, duly authenticated. Her cargo consisted of general merchan-  
dise, on consignment to the house of Lenard & Co., which she commenced discharging on  
the second day after entering port.

I took advantage of an opportunity of visiting her on the day subsequent

to her arrival, in company with Capt. Parker of the ship Sea Gull, Captain Hunt of the Tyrol, and Col. Ferguson, the last-named gentleman being acquainted with Captain Tolbert. We were cordially received on board by that noted individual, of whom I had heard so much, but never met till now; and, from his affable manners and genial conversation, I could scarcely realize that the man confronting me was the celebrated character whose daring deeds have oft time produced such a furor and excitement in the East Indies. The very embodiment of grace and politeness, excessively lavish in manifestations of hospitality, and brim full of dry humor, my first impressions could not be otherwise than favorable - for, to my amazement I discovered in him evidences of the refined gentleman instead of the "blood-thirsty pirate" which the "Times of India" has been pleased to term him.

In compliance with the request of Col. Ferguson, Capt. Tolbert narrated the particulars of the manner in which he won the wager in Calcutta - "that Booth was alive;" and in reply to a remark ventured by Capt. Hunt, as follows: "Well, Captain, I must say you did humbug the Calcutta folks pretty badly; really it is a shame!" Tolbert coolly said; "Humbugged them? there was no humbug about it, sir! I fulfilled my part of the contract, and furnished proof that Booth was alive! Why do you term it humbug? I desire an explanation, sir!" The following conversation ensued, which (having taken down on the spot) I give verbatim et literatim: "The reason why I call it by that name is simply this: I do not believe Booth is alive, nor that, if your opponent had seen proper to have contested the matter, a fair decision would have given it in your favor." Whereupon Capt. Tolbert, becoming somewhat excited, remarked: "Capt. Hunt, if I am not mistaken in you, you are a man who will back any assertion you may make with your money; am I correct?" To this Hunt replied: "I believe I am, sir, if I know myself." "Well, then, sir, if you believe Booth is not alive, how many pounds would you be willing to back that belief with; otherwise what do you value your opinion at?" "I value my opinion very highly, Captain; but that is not saying that I would risk a bet on a thing unless I thought I had a fair shake?" "Please name your own conditions, and the amount you wish to put up; you shall be accommodated in each." "The only manner in which I should be willing to stake anything upon the matter in dispute, would be this: I must

see Booth, or the party purporting to be Booth, with my own eyes, and have an opportunity of conversing with and questioning him in order to satisfy myself whether he is alive or not, as it so happens I know him quite intimately, and could not be deceived. If the person whom you allege is Booth should prove to be a humbug the money at stake will be mine; but if I recognize in him the genuine John Wilkes Booth, it will be yours. I know Booth so well that I could not fail to indentify him at first sight, even through his disguise - should he wear one. If you will grant me this liberty I would be willing to draw a draft in favor of the winner for two thousand pounds sterling at thirty, sixty or ninety days" sight." "Your proposition is accepted, provided that you have no objections to going before a Magistrate and taking an oath of eternal secrecy, the nature of which I shall there and then make known to you." "Having no desire to profit by giving information to the United States Government of his whereabouts in case he is alive, I have no objections to taking an oath of secrecy so far as divulging Booth's place of residence is concerned. Firmly believing that he is not alive, my only object is to fully satisfy myself of the fact. If I loose I shall have sufficient sense to hold my tongue, and, if I win, I shall do the same. In either case my curiosity shall have been fully satisfied. Is that satisfactory?" "I will take you at your word, Captain!" But, hold! perhaps it would be better to have this in black and white, as we are strangers to each other," whereupon, having gained Hunt's assent, Capt. Tolbert hastily drew up an article specifying the terms of the agreement, to which both Hunt and himself signed their names requesting the remainder of the party present to witness it, and then gave it to Col. Ferguson, requesting him to keep it until the question was decided. Tolbert then said: "Let us now proceed to a Magistrate's office and have the other articles drawn up at once."

Everything being in readiness, we all above started ashore a few minutes after the spirited conversation transpired, Capt. Tolbert going in his own boat (a handsome little gig with which his ship was supplied). We were not long in reaching the quay, and being invited by the two Captains to accompany them to the Magistrate's office, Colonel Ferguson, Captain Parker, and myself were witnesses to all that transpired between them. Upon reaching the office the following oath was administered to Captain Hunt, "You do

solemly swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that you will not betray the confidence reposed in you by the two individuals with whom you are about to enter into an agreement, so help you God." Tolbert then suggested the following more secure form, which was drawn up: "I, Charles Newton Hunt, do solemly swear, in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, that I will forever conceal and never reveal the name of the town, city or country where lives and breathes the mortal body of John Wilkes Booth, so help me God." Tolbert then, drawing a sharp-pointed siletto, very coolly presented it to Capt. Hunt, asking him to prick his arm ~~his arm~~ till the blood comes; then, handing him a pen, requested him to catch a drop of blood upon the point and write his signature to the above oath. Captain Hunt very reluctantly complied, signing his name in full, writing with his own blood. The magistrate, Mr. Samuel Reboliet, Col. Moses D. Ferguson, Capt. Joseph H Parker, and myself then witnessed it, and Capt. Tolbert, sealing it up, handed it to Mr. Reboliet, requested him to put it in a place of safety, and deliver it to no person save himself. The magistrate then drew up the following article of agreement: "We, undersigned, being equal participants in the question at issue, do hereby bind ourselves to deposit two thousand pounds sterling (£2,000) each in the hands of the President of the Bank of Bombay, in the city of Bombay, British India, this the 31st of March, 1867, the aforesaid sum total of four thousand pounds to be held by said President of said bank till the expiration of ninety days, to be subjected at such a time to the order of either one of the two parties whose signatures are hereto affixed. (Signed) W. Martin Tolbert, Chas. Newton Hunt. Done before me at my office in the city of Bombay, this the 21 of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven. (Signed) Samuel Reboliet, Notary Public." Two duplicates of the above agreement were drawn off, signed, and one delivered to each of the Captains, the original being held by the magistrate. The costs having been paid, etc., we proceeded to a refreshment saloon, and after partaking of a sumptuous repast at the expense of Capt. Tolbert, our party dispersed to arrange the preliminaries of the bet, making an appointment at the Royal Exchange at 3 P. M.

Capt. Parker, Col. Ferguson, and myself were on the ground promptly at the appointed hour, and found Tolbert already there. Hunt arrived about fifteen minutes

later, and thence we all proceeded to the Bank of Bombay, where the two Captains deposited Bank of England notes to the amount of two thousand pounds each, and received bank certificates therefor, payable at ninety days sight, with the understanding expressed in writing that the whole amount should be paid to either party on the presentation of both receipts.

A few days after this the papers announced that the ship "Bird of the Ocean," Tolbert master, had sailed for Colombo, Ceylon. Meeting Capt. Parker the same evening, I inquired if Capt. Hunt had gone. "Yes," he replied, "he went as passenger in the 'Bird of the Ocean,' and left his first mate in charge of the 'Loyal' till his return. He told me that he would be back in about six weeks, and appeared quite jubilant over his big bet; said he felt confident of winning, as he believed Tolbert was only a 'blower,' and was determined to 'bluff' him; that he still felt sure Booth was not alive and when he found out where the 'hoax' was, he would expose it." I told Parker I was fearful Hunt would lose the money; that it did not seem reasonable that Tolbert would recklessly bet so large a sum on an uncertainty, and that he must remember he won in Calcutta.

Nothing was heard of the ship for seven weeks, when it was announced by telegraph that the "Bird of the Ocean" had arrived at Madras. On the following day Capt. Parker received a telegraph in these words: "I have lost! The man, Booth is actually alive. I should have been at Bombay ere this: but we have encountered heavy weather. Shall be there soon. Chas. Newton Hunt."

Neither of the parties can reach here for some days to come. When they do arrive there will be considerable excitement in their immediate circles of acquaintance at least. Thus, it seems, has Captain W. Martin Tolbert won another large sum of money upon this most mysterious of all the nineteenth century, leaving no doubt in the mind of any thinking person that J. Wilkes Booth is alive. I have given you the full details of this strange affair so far as I know, and will write you again as soon as Captain Hunt returns, if I gain any farther particulars as to how he lost the wager. I still remain your sincere friend.

(Signed)

WILLIAM A. FRAZER, F. R. S.