

SKETCHES OF THE ASSASSINS

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John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, has at last been hunted from his hiding place, and in attempting to escape has been shot and killed. His desperate flight and resistance until shot give an additional interest to the history of the desperado made notorious and infamous by his cowardly assassination of the President.

John Wilkes Booth, the third son of Lucius Junius Booth, the celebrated actor, was born on "The Farm," his father's estate, near Baltimore, in 1838. He made his first appearance on the stage in 1855, under the name of Wilkes, as Richmond, in Richard III, at the St. Charles theatre, Baltimore, being then but seventeen years of age. He subsequently made a regular debut under his proper name in Philadelphia, but did not meet with the success his young ambition had anticipated. In 1858 he went to Richmond, Virginia, as a stock actor in George Kunkel's company, but his vicious disposition, offensive manners and intemperate habits not only retarded his success professionally, but socially, and his popularity was confined to the class of young desperados who haunt Southern cities in great numbers. He habitually went armed, and was often led by his dissipation into numerous quarrels. Leaving Richmond in 1860, he went to Montgomery, where he was engaged as "leading man" at the Montgomery theatre. While here his habits of dissipation did not improve. In 1861 the pistol which he always carried accidentally exploded, wounding him severely in the leg. He was forced to abandon the stage for a time, and came North. When he had recovered he played star engagements in this city, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington - his last appearance professionally being at Ford's theatre,

Washington, in the part of Pescara, in the Apostate, for the benefit of Joseph McCullough. This was but a short time previous to the fearful tragedy in which he engaged at the same theatre on the night of April 14, 1865.

It is now known that after committing the deed, which resulted in the death of the President, Booth, in attempting to escape, was thrown from his horse and broke his leg. So admirable, however, were the arrangements of his numerous accomplices, that he was still enabled to get off safely, and, in spite of the vigorous pursuit of the government detectives, to cross the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers before being captured or killed.

In person Booth was not tall, but handsomely formed, with regular features and fine complexion. His hair, jet black and glossy, curled slightly, and set off in fine relief a high, intellectual forehead, and a face full of intelligence. Both chin and nose were marked prominent, and the firm set lips and lines about the mouth indicated firmness of will, decision and resolution. He was scrupulously neat in his dress, and selected his habit with a rare perception of what was becoming to his figure and complexion. He would pass anywhere for a neatly though not over-dressed man of fashion. He was unmarried and much given to amours. It was said that he was an opium eater; but it is only certain that he frequently drank to excess. He was a dead shot, a fine fencer, a thorough horseman, and a master of the dagger or bowie-knife. His personal bravery was never questioned. It has been stated by Washington papers, with an air of authority, that at the time of his murder of the President he held a commission in the rebel army as lieutenant colonel, but if so, the appointment was of course a secret save to a few.