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JOHN WILKES BOOTH.

THE TRUE STORY OF HIS DEATH AND BURIAL.

BY ISAAC MARKENS, NEW YORK CITY.

Although the death of John Wilkes Booth on the morning of April 26, 1865, has been clearly established, an impression prevails that the assassin of Lincoln for many years after he shot the President at Ford's Theater, in Washington, on the night of April 14, lived under assumed names at various towns in the West and Southwest and passed away a few years ago. How far from right are the many stories being published from time to time on this subject is shown by the following:

Near Port Royal, Va., at the home of Richard Henry Garrett, Booth made his last stop after leaving Washington. In a barn about one hundred yards from the Garrett house, Booth and his companion, David E. Herold, were found at 2 A.M., guards having been stationed near the Garrett house and around the barn. Jack Garrett, a young son of Richard Henry, was sent to the inmates of the barn to appeal for their surrender. To this Booth replied with an oath: "You get out of here; you have betrayed me." Through the cracks of the barn showed the light of a burning candle carried by the pursuing party. Inside the barn was dark. Repeated demands for surrender having been refused by Booth, he was told by Lieut. L. C. Baker, the government detective, one of the soldiers, that fifty men with him, armed with carbines and pistols, made escape impossible. Booth demurred, saying: "This is a hard case, I swear." Then he asked for time to consider. Finally Baker warned Booth that unless he surrendered his arms and came out of the barn, the barn would be fired. Booth answered he was a cripple, with one leg, he had but one leg, and if Baker's men would withdraw fifty yards from the door of the barn, he would come out and fight them; he asked for a chance for his life. To this proposition Baker replied he did not come there to fight. Next, one of the Garretts was requested to pile some brush up against the corner of the barn, pine boughs. Here further conversation with Booth ceased. After a while the two fugitives engaged in much talk, which ended with Booth saying to Herold, "You damned coward, will you leave me now?" Next Herold came to the door and said: "Let me out." The firing of the barn followed; loose hay blazed very rapidly. In Booth's hands was a carbine. Sergeant Burton Corbett, of the 13th New York Cavalry, whose mind was upon Booth attentively, was

General Ramsey replied as follows:

"Major General E. D. Townsend, A. A. G., U. S. Army, Washington, D. C.

"Sir: I have the honor to report that the body of John Wilkes Booth was, on Monday afternoon, the 15th inst., delivered to the person designated in the order of the President of the United States of the same date.

"I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant

GEORGE D. RAMSEY,

*Brevet Major General U. S. Army Commanding."*

How far from true is the statement of one Blanche Bates, a reputed niece of John Wilkes Booth, that his mother or any others of the Booth family visited him in the West after his "escape," or believed-in escape, is evidenced by a letter by Edwin Booth, his respected brother, as early as September 11, 1867, to General Grant at Washington, from Barnum's Hotel, Baltimore, where he was then stopping:

"Gen. U. S. Grant.

"Sir: Having once received a promise from Mr. Stanton (~~Secretary of War~~) that the family of John Wilkes Booth should be permitted to obtain the body when sufficient time had elapsed, I yielded to the entreaties of my mother and applied for it to the Secretary of War, I fear too soon, for the letter was unheeded, if indeed it ever reached him. I now appeal to you, in behalf of my heart-broken mother, that she may receive the remains of her son. You, sir, can understand what a consolation it would be to an aged parent to have the privilege of visiting the grave of her child, and I feel assured that you will, even in the midst of your most pressing duties, feel a touch of sympathy for her, one of the greatest sufferers living.

"May I not hope, too, that you will listen to our entreaties and send me some encouragement, some information how and when the remains may be obtained? By so doing you will receive the gratitude of a most unhappy family, and will, I am sure, be justified by all right-thinking minds should the matter become known to others than ourselves.

"I shall remain in Baltimore two weeks from the date of this letter, during which time I could send a trustworthy person to bring hither and probably bury the remains on the family grounds, thus relieving my poor mother of much misery.

"Apologizing for my intrusion, and anxiously awaiting a reply to this,

"I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,

EDWIN BOOTH."

To this letter General Grant, so far as known, made no reply, probably from disinclination to confer with President Johnson, his superior, with whom he and Stanton, about this time, were involved in the political squabble which led to Johnson's impeachment. Here Edwin Booth ceased to figure on the matter of his brother's remains until February 10, 1869, twenty days before Johnson's retirement from the presidency, when he addressed Johnson, begging that he will not delay in ordering the body to be given to the care of the aforesaid Mr. Weaver, and at the same time he requested of the President the return of a trunk of his brother's at the National Hotel, Washington, for which he had once applied, but was refused, it being under the seal of the War Department, and which he thought might contain relics of "the poor misguided boy," which would be dear to his sorrowing mother and of no use to anyone. "Your Excellency," wrote Edwin "would greatly lessen the crushing weight of grief by giving immediate orders for the safe delivery of the remains of John Wilkes Booth to Mr. Weaver, and gain the lasting gratitude of your obedient servant, Edwin Booth."

(OVER)

*Barnum's Hotel  
Baltimore  
Sept 11, 1867*

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*in  
privately*

X

told by one of his companions that Booth was watching him and that he aimed the carbine at him. Corbett then, believing that the time had come, shot him through a large crack in the barn. The wound was made in the neck, a little back of the ear, and came out a little higher up in the upper side of the head. He was shot at fifteen minutes past three o'clock, lingered two hours and a quarter, and died in terrible agony. Secretary Stanton, when informed of the capture and death of Booth, the same night sent a tug to Alexandria to meet the steamer Ide, having Booth's body on board. From the tug the body was transferred to the monitor Montauk at 1:45 A. M. the next day, April 27, taken out of the blankets in which it was wrapped, and placed on deck in charge of a guard. Later that day, by direction of the Secretary of the Navy Welles, the body was seen on the Montauk by the Surgeon General and his assistant, Judge Advocate General Holt, John A. Bingham, William T. Moore, Col. L. C. Baker, Lieutenant Baker, Lieutenant Colonel Conger, Charles Dawson, J. L. Smith, and Alexandria Gardner, government photographer. It was then delivered, after the Surgeon General had made his autopsy, in a strong box to Colonel Baker. To further establish identification beyond doubt, J. F. May, of Washington, who had removed a tumor from Booth's neck two years before, readily found the scar. The body was further identified by his initials on his right arm in India ink, and by the personal recognition of many intimate acquaintances. The Surgeon General at this time cut from Booth's neck a section of the spine through which the ball passed. The same day a secret burial of Booth was made on the arsenal grounds at Washington, the body being lowered in the grave in a pine gun box stored in the Ordnance Department close by. There it rested until February 15, 1869, when, upon the request of Booth's mother, the body, by order of President Johnson, was delivered to the sexton of Christ Church, Baltimore. In accordance with instructions of Edwin Booth, J. H. Weaver, undertaken of Baltimore, and Harvey & Marr, undertakers of Washington, the body was prepared for burial, after being further identified by a dentist who had filled Booth's teeth. It was then taken from Washington by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and three days later, on February 18, interred in lots 9-10, Area Dogwood, Greenmount Cemetery, Baltimore, said lots being in the name of Mrs. Mary Ann Booth.

Further evidence of the fate of Booth is found in the payment by the government of \$75,000 to his captors, in accordance with a reward offered by the War Department, April 20, 1865, which was distributed, in 1866, to eight army officers and detectives and twenty-six soldiers, of which E. J. Conger, detective, received \$15,000, and Burton Corbett, the man who shot Booth, \$1,653.85, the same as all other soldiers.

What purports to be the true story of Booth's escape, as told recently by pretended relatives of the assassin, now living in the West and elsewhere, in face of the above statement based on official records in Washington, is pure fabrication, as shown by the following documents on file in the War Department, dated February 15, 1869:

"To Brevet General George D. Ramsey, Commanding Washington Arsenal.

"The President directs that the body of John Wilkes Booth, interred at the Washington Arsenal, be delivered to Mr. John Weaver, sexton of Christ Church, Baltimore, Md., for the purpose of having it removed and properly interred. Please report the execution of the order.

"I am, etc.,

E. D. T., A. A. G."