

ABDUCTION PLOTS

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Chapter 2

ABDUCTION PLOTS

"The ambitious youth who fired the Ephesian dome  
Outlives in fame the pious fool who reared it."

*is credited as having*  
John Wilkes Booth *as having then exclaimed:* quoted this to a theatrical acquaintance early  
in 1863 and *Such a remark* remarked: "What a glorious opportunity there is for a man to  
immortalize himself by killing Lincoln." (1) *would not have been thought unusual or taken seriously* That it was but a passing  
thought is borne out by the details of his later kidnapping plots, but, *at the time* *the attitude of a great many people*  
nevertheless, it represents a suggestion made by newspapers both North and  
South and *during the war between the states* absorbed by the unbalanced mind of Wilkes Booth.

*Booth was not the only enemy* Many of the present generation in the North have the impression  
that all of Abraham Lincoln's *had who was worth* deadly enemies, except Booth, were South of  
the Mason and Dixon Line. A perusal of the newspapers *of the period shows* 1860-1865 indicates  
that there were many in the North, even amongst those who did not sympathize  
with the Southern cause, who ardently desired the *death* destruction of the president.  
An example of ~~this~~ Northern vindictiveness toward Mr. Lincoln is exhibited by  
the Chicago Times, July 1, 1864: "He (Abraham Lincoln) could not be more  
worthless dead than he 'is living, but would be infinitely less mischievous,  
and his corpse, repulsive as it would be in its present state and richest and  
most graceful habiliments, would not be the most appropriate sacrifice which  
the insulted nation could offer in atonement for its submission to his imbec-  
ility and <sup>S</sup>depotism."

The New York World in its efforts to elect General McClellan in the  
presidential campaign of 1864 resorted to a personal attack on the honesty  
and integrity of the President as well as the charges of "ignorance, incompe-  
tency, and corruption of *his* Mr. Lincoln's Administration." (2)

In a letter dated April 18, 1865, to the editors of the Chicago  
Tribune and printed in that publication, a Chicago man wrote: "There is one  
fact which I think ought to be known. Last fall, while a member of the Sons

And the remarkable fact, the miracle, is that he was not assassinated before April Fourteenth 1865

of Liberty (3) in this city, I heard, and instantly reported to General Sweet, which reports were forwarded to the War Department at Washington, a distinct proposition to raise \$50,000 to send a man to Washington to assassinate President Lincoln."

One need only remember the many schemes to capture the Kaiser in the late Great War to understand how the idea of abducting Abraham Lincoln would appeal to <sup>Some Confederates</sup> ~~Southerners~~ and <sup>their</sup> ~~Southern~~ sympathizers in 1864 and 1865. The man who could have planned and successfully executed a coup such as that would have been hailed as a William Tell by the hard pressed Southern forces. This may have been talked about around the camp fires of the Confederate armies as was the kidnapping of the Kaiser by American soldiers from both sides of the Mason and Dixon Line as they huddled together in dug-outs along the front line trenches in France.

Whether abducting Lincoln was first suggested to John Wilkes Booth by agents of the Richmond government, as <sup>was</sup> ~~has been claimed~~ <sup>at the great trial</sup> ~~but never sustained,~~ <sup>of the conspirators</sup> or whether the idea was a child of his own disordered imagination, will always be a moot question. If Booth discussed it at all with any official of the Richmond government, it is more than likely it was on his own initiative. Jefferson Davis, the Confederate States President, was not unused to receiving such suggestions from others. ~~Plans for both kidnapping and assassination were many and varied and were not confined to one side.~~

Major Walker Taylor, of the Confederate Army, a nephew of Zachary Taylor, proposed a scheme to Jefferson Davis in 1863 for the abduction of Lincoln, but Davis refused to consider the proposal as he feared the President might be killed in its execution. (4)

The New York Tribune <sup>Claimed</sup> ~~stated during the Civil war~~ <sup>March 19, 1864</sup> that a plan had been submitted to the Confederate war department by Colonel Margrave, who <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ <sup>a reputed Confederate</sup> ~~been for a considerable time an agent in the north, to kidnap President Lincoln~~

and carry him to Richmond, or if it should be found impossible to escape with him to the Confederate lines, to assassinate him, but that ~~owing to~~ a change in the position of the armies about this time <sup>had made</sup> the plan ~~was rendered~~ impracticable. (5)

Later the Colonel, <sup>said</sup> ~~according to~~ the Tribune, submitted another plan by which one hundred and fifty picked men were to go secretly North and take quarters at Washington, Georgetown, Baltimore and Alexandria, and, upon a day fixed by their leader, assemble in Washington for the purpose of ~~making the~~ capture <sup>ing</sup> of the President, <sup>who according to the Colonel</sup> ~~it was claimed~~, could easily be seized at a private hour at the White House, or in going to or returning from church, or on some other favorable occasion, and thrust into a carriage and driven off. The carriage was to be joined a few miles out of the city by a squad or two of armed men on horseback.

It was proposed to drive to Indian Point, about 25 miles south of Washington, on the Potomac—two or three relays of fleet horses being stationed on the way—where a boat was to be in waiting to cross the river, and land the captive a few miles south of Occoquan, when it would be an easy matter for his captors to work their way with him through the woods by night into the Confederate lines.

<sup>The Tribune reported that</sup> ~~It was said that~~ the Confederate Secretary of War <sup>had</sup> thought this scheme might succeed; but doubted whether such a proceeding would be of a military character and justifiable under the laws of war. (6)

(7) ~~In A Rebel War Clerk's Diary (7) at the Confederate States Capital~~  
<sup>A clerk in the Confederate War Department at Richmond his diary (7)</sup>  
~~by J.B. Jones,~~ under date of August 26, 1863, ~~there is the statement that,~~  
"H.C. -----, a mad private, and Northern man, in a Georgia regiment, wrote to the President (Jefferson Davis) proposing <sup>to</sup> to take some 300 to 500 men of resolution and assassinate the leading public men of the United States." "The President," the diarist says, "referred the paper, without notice, to the Secretary of War."

In the Selma, Alabama, Dispatch there appeared in December 1864, the following advertisement:-

"ONE MILLION DOLLARS WANTED TO HAVE PEACE BY THE 1ST OF MARCH:- If the citizens of the Southern Confederacy will furnish me with the cash, or good securities for the sum of one million dollars, I will cause the lives of Abraham Lincoln, Wm. H. Seward, and Andrew Johnson to be taken by the 1st of March next. This will give us peace, and satisfy the world that cruel tyrants can not live in a 'land of liberty'. If this is not accomplished, nothing will be claimed beyond the sum of fifty thousand dollars in advance, which is supposed to be necessary to reach and slaughter the three villains.

"I will give, myself, one thousand dollars toward this patriotic purpose. Every one wishing to contribute will address Box X, Cahawba, Alabama. December 1, 1864." (7/2)

*put in notes*  
~~On June 27th, 1865, at the trial of the Conspirators in Washington,~~  
*was brought to Washington and at the trial of the Conspirators*  
(7 1/2) John Catlin foreman of the Selma Dispatch testified that this advertisement *had been* was inserted by Mr. G.W. Gayle, a prominent Alabama lawyer "who was distinguished even in Alabama for his extreme views on the subject of slavery and the rebellion, and as an ardent supporter of the Confederacy."

As a result, Gayle was indicted for conspiracy, but when it was found that he "was not worth a hundred dollars", his notice was looked upon as a mere squib. *and*

Upon the recommendation of the Union Military Officers stationed in his neighborhood he was pardoned April 27, 1867. (7 3/4)

Secretary of War."

*in the*  
*Which appeared in the Cincinnati Commercial*  
*claims*

In a letter dated June 14, 1865, one John D. Van Dien stated that during the war he had been a clerk in the Confederate War Department and that his duties were principally endorsing all papers belonging to the Confederate secret service. He states that many documents were received from parties in the South, offering to capture or assassinate Mr. Lincoln, but that such propositions never were given the least attention, but were universally passed over, without official notice.

He reports a conversation at which he was present, which he says occurred in the latter part of February 1865, in the War Department office, between President Davis, Secretary Judah P. Benjamin and Mr. Breckinridge, and two strangers, one of whom he later thought had been Booth. This party, writes Mr. Van Dien, said that a plan was formed by parties in the northern states and Canada, friends of the Confederacy, to capture or assassinate Mr. Lincoln, and that all they desired was official recognition on the part of the Confederate authorities; that they did not want pecuniary assistance from the government, as that was already secured; that they were not after gain, but were actuated only by a desire to render the Confederacy a service, by "removing the tyrant who was the cause of so much suffering to the country and the only obstacle in the way of a speedy peace." Mr. Van Dien asserted that Davis and Breckinridge both expressed their hearty condemnation of the plot, and advised "the proposers to think no more of it." (8)

Jefferson Davis' opinion of Mr. Lincoln and these plots is best expressed by Dr. John J. Craven, (9) who attended Davis during his imprisonment after the war. Dr. Craven says that Mr. Davis did not speak of Mr. Lincoln in affected terms of regard or admiration, but paid a simple and sincere tribute to his goodness of character, honesty of purpose, and to his official purity and freedom from avarice. Mr. Davis said according to Dr. Craven, that behind

Mr. Lincoln, during his first term, there stood an infinitely more objectionable and less scrupulous successor (Mr. Hamlin); and that the blow that struck down the President of the United States would place that successor in power. That when Mr. Lincoln was reinaugurated, the cause of the Southern people was hopeless, or very nearly so, the continuance of the struggle being only justifiable as a means for obtaining terms; and from no <sup>other</sup> ruler the United States could have had might terms so generous have been expected. He felt that Mr. Johnson, being from the South, dare not offer such liberal treatment, as his motives would be impugned. In view of this, it was Mr. Davis' opinion that Mr. Lincoln's death, even by natural causes, would have been a serious injury to the prospects of the South; but that the manner of his taking-off, "frenzying the Northern mind, was the last crowning calamity of a despairing and defeated, though righteous cause."

There were, on the other hand, Northern plots to abduct or assassinate Jefferson Davis, and these must be considered in their bearing on the Southern plots against Lincoln. Early in March 1864, Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, in command of a Northern cavalry detachment, was killed in a raid on Richmond. On his body <sup>it was claimed by the Confederate government</sup> were found an address to his men, "special orders and instructions," and a notebook which indicated that his mission was the assassination of Jefferson Davis and the Southern cabinet, the release of Federal Prisoners at Richmond and the burning of that city. (10)

Photographic copies of the papers and of Colonel Dahlgren's notebook were sent by General Lee to General Mead who denied any knowledge of the orders and stated they had not been authorized or sanctioned. (11) Thus the origin of these papers never has been satisfactorily explained. The "Orders" however, were published broadcast in Southern newspapers of the period and the ~~unsupported~~ assertion made that "General Kilpatrick and Colonel Dahlgren came directly from a conference in Washington with President Lincoln and acted by his authority and approval." This, of course, greatly embittered and enflamed ~~all friends~~ of the

South against Lincoln. (12)

To what extent ~~the~~ <sup>probably</sup> affair influenced or suggested many of the <sup>plans</sup> plots to capture or assassinate Lincoln, ~~will never be known.~~ Since the "Dahlgren Raid" occurred in March 1864, a few months before Booth first discussed ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> abduction scheme with two of his boyhood friends, he and they must have been thoroughly familiar with the view held by the Richmond Government and the wave of indignation the Dahlgren papers had created in the South.

What was John Wilkes Booth's motive for desiring to kidnap President Lincoln? Was it fanatic hatred? Was it mere bravado? According to all authentic documents it had a method and a purpose. It was the result of General Grant's order of April 17, 1864, which prevented the further exchange of prisoners between North and South. (13)

*General* Grant in a letter, August 18, 1864, to Major General Butler said: "It is hard on our men held in Southern prisons not to exchange them, but it is humanity to those left in the ranks to fight our battles. Every man we hold, when released on parole or otherwise, becomes an active soldier against us at once either directly or indirectly. If we commence a system of exchange which liberates all prisoners taken, we will have to fight on until the whole South is exterminated. If we hold those caught they amount to no more than dead men. At this particular time to release all rebel prisoners in the North would insure Sherman's defeat and would compromise our safety here." (14)

A week later Grant wrote ~~Major~~ General H.W. Halleck, chief of staff: "I see by the Richmond Examiner of today that General Canby is about exchanging the prisoners captured at Fort Gaines. I hope General Canby will be instructed to take no more exchanges. It is giving the enemy re-enforcements at a time when they are of immediate importance to him." (15)

The feeling in Richmond on the question of exchanges can be best described by J.B. Jones, the clerk in the Confederate War Department to whose diary we already have referred. (16) April 6, 1864, he wrote "But, Alas! how



are our brave men faring in the hands of the demon fanatics in the United States? It is said they are dying like sheep." And Colonel John S. Mosby C.S.A. in his memoirs (17) says "Grant's remorseless policy had caused the Confederates to rob the cradle and the grave."

John Wilkes Booth hoped to remedy this serious condition for the South by kidnapping Lincoln and forcing the North to pay a heavy ransom in Confederate prisoners for his return, and a contributing motive was the very wildness of the enterprise which appealed to his instinct for the dramatic, and to his warped mentality. Booth, however, was not the only one plotting and scheming to effect ~~the~~ Southern prisoners' relief. *the release of captured soldiers*

On March 16, 1864, soon after the Dahlgren raid, an effort was directed by Jefferson Davis and the Confederate war department to organize the Confederate soldiers in Canada, most of whom ~~were~~ *had already* escaped ~~prisoners~~ *from Northern prison camps* for the purpose of liberating ~~Confederate prisoners~~ *being to a captured soldiers imprisoned* in the United States and ~~to~~ *effecting* any fair and appropriate enterprises of war against our enemies."

*To accomplish this Davis* (18) For ~~this purpose~~ he sent commissioners to Canada, April 27, 1864. (19)

In pursuit of this object, on September 18, 1864, Capt. John Yates Beall, an officer of the Confederate Navy, made an attempt with the aid of other Confederates, to capture the U.S. gunboat Michigan, and release the Confederate prisoners on Johnson's Island in the western end of Lake Erie, destroy Northern shipping on the Great Lakes, and levy tribute on the coast cities. *(start)*

(20) Beall was apprehended December 15, 1864, at Niagara Falls, imprisoned at Fort Lafayette, N.Y., tried in February 1865 as a guerilla, spy and pirate, and on February 8, 1865, sentenced to hang. An appeal was taken to President Lincoln, who refused to interfere. (21)

Beall's execution February 24, 1865, was violently condemned by the South and considered a serious mistake by many in the North. While there is not the slightest evidence to show that Booth had any interest in Beall

at this time, a story gained currency about twenty years ago that Booth and Beall had been room-mates at college, and were very dear friends, and that therein lay the motive for the President's assassination. (22)

Beall entered the University of Virginia in 1852 when John Wilkes Booth was fourteen years of age, and Booth did not go to college. Beall ran the family farm from 1855 until the Civil War, while Booth was attempting a stage career during this time. This disproves the room-mate and friendship myth.

Several variations of the story have appeared in various quarters and still live, notwithstanding the strange fact that neither Beall or Booth in their diaries or letters mention each other or any of these incidents. Booth's plots against the President also were fully formed many months before Beall's capture. (23) These myths are thought to have originated in the imagination of a sensationalist editor, Mark M. Pomeroy, as they were first published in his Pomeroy's Democrat shortly after the war. (24)

During the summer of 1864 it had been noticed by his relatives that John Wilkes Booth was ~~more~~<sup>more</sup> restless than usual, the previous fall he had quit the stage for speculation in Pennsylvania oil lands, but this did not account for his "strange, wild and ever moving" spirit which caused all his family some degree of anxiety. (24½) In his mind the presidential kidnapping plot was developing. The first definite statement of it to others, however, as far as can be learned, was in Barnum's Hotel Baltimore, sometime in August of that year. It is a strange coincidence that it was in this same hotel that an Italian barber, Fernandina, worked in 1861 when he plotted the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, who was to be killed as he passed through on his way to Washington for the first inauguration. (24a)

According to the confession of Samuel Arnold, a fellow conspirator (25) and a former schoolmate, Booth invited him and another friend of his youth, Michael O'Laughlin, to his room in the hotel. Wine and cigars were served, and after reminiscing over school days, the discussion turned to the Southern military situation, which was of special interest to all three--Booth, the Southern sympathizer; Arnold and O'Laughlin, ex-Confederate soldiers who had recently returned to their homes.

What a picture these three must have made, bending over wine glasses,

their eyes burning with excitement while they furiously smoked and vehemently discussed the lost cause; Booth of medium height and build, with his luxuriant hair and drooping mustache; the "Spanish looking" O'Laughlin, short and slender, also with luxuriant black locks and a delicate mustache and whiskers, and Arnold with his black hair and beard. (26)

The conversation turned to the large number of Confederate prisoners held by the United States, and at this point Wilkes Booth proposed his plot to kidnap Abraham Lincoln on one of the president's frequent trips from the White House to the soldier's home about three miles distant, take him to Richmond and offer to exchange him for all the prisoners in Federal hands. Booth was so enthusiastic and painted the "chances of success in such glowing colors" that Arnold and O'Laughlin readily consented to enter the conspiracy. Booth then left, promising that after he had arranged his business affairs in New York and in Pennsylvania, where he had oil lands, he would return and perfect their plans. (27)

Thus it was that he began to gather around him that "small group of visionary extremists in whom much brooding upon Southern wrongs had produced an unbalanced condition." (28)

Booth closed out all his oil holdings (29) and on September 27th (27) a month after his conference with Arnold and O'Laughlin, he went to Boston and then in October to Montreal where he spent nine days—from the 18th to the 27th. (30) Just what transpired in Montreal has always been a subject for conjecture. The Federal Government made a futile attempt at the trial of the conspirators to prove that Booth at this time met and consulted with Jacob Thompson, confederate agent in Canada, and his associates. Two witnesses were brought forward who testified that they saw Booth in conversation with George N. Sanders, one of the agents, in the St. Lawrence Hotel, Montreal, but beyond this the evidence was merely circumstantial. (31)

*and were sworn not to divulge to a living soul.*

On October 27, 1864, while in Montreal, Booth purchased a draft on the Montreal Branch of the Ontario Bank for sixty-one pounds, thirteen shillings and tenpence and deposited \$455.00, which still remained to his credit at the time of the Surratt trial in 1867. (32) "I am going to run the blockade," he said to one of the bank tellers that day, "and in case I am captured, can my capturers make use of the exchange?" He had taken his theatrical costumes with him to Canada. These he shipped on the blockade running schooner, Marie Victoria, for either the Bahamas or some point in the South. (33)

Sometime in November 1864, Booth deposited at the home of his sister, Mrs. John S. Clark, in Philadelphia, a large sealed envelope directed to himself. This he called for the following January and then later returned it. Since his signature on the document that was found enclosed is in a different ink from the body, it may be presumed that he desired the papers a second time for the purpose of adding this.

When the envelope was opened after the assassination, it was found to contain "An address to the People of the North, a letter for his mother, three thousand dollars in bonds, and an assignment of some oil lands to his brother, Junius." The letter to his mother "exonerated his relatives from any sympathy with his secession propensities." The "Address", widely published in the press soon after Lincoln's death, gives the political beliefs of John Wilkes Booth and explains his motives for the attempts to kidnap the President. (34)

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NOTES

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Notes

- The Detroit Free Press April 18, 1865 quotes Chicago Times with statement that G.W.B. said this in a conversation with manager McVicker of a Chicago theatre.*
- (1) Quoted by The Cleveland Leader, April 17, 1865, from The Chicago Journal.
  - (2) Rhodes "History of the United States" by James Ford, Edition of 1920, Vol. 1V, p.531 and The New York World, September 22, 23 and October 1, 1864.
  - (3) A secret organization first known as the "Knights of the Golden Circle"; later as the "Order of American Knights" which was changed early in 1864 to "Sons of Liberty". It was made up of those who opposed the President, his administration and the conduct of the war, and had as its object the overthrow of the existing National Government.
  - (4) Rhodes Vol. V, p.513-514.
  - (5) Clipping - Lincoln Scrap Book, p.46, Congressional Library.
  - (6) Ibed
  - (7) Vol. 11, p.24. <sup>(7 1/2)</sup> C.T. p.51.
  - (7 1/2) Imp. Inv. p.564-5.
  - (8) Clipping - Lincoln Scrap Book, Congressional Library, p.88.
  - (9) "The Prison Life of Jefferson Davis" by Col. John J. Craven, M.D. p.196-197.
  - (10) Confederate Operations in Canada and New York, by John W. Headley, The Neale Pub. Co., New York and Washington, 1906, p.175-185.
  - (11) Rhodes Vol. V, p.514-515.
  - (12) Confederate Operations in Canada and New York, by John W. Headley, Richmond Examiner, March 5, 1864, and Jones' Diary.
  - (13) Confessions - Arnold and Atzerodt - Baltimore American, Jan 18, 1869 and Official Records of The Rebellion, Series 11, Vol. VII, p.62-63.
  - (14) O.R. Series 11, Vol. VII, p. 606-607. Also Vol. VIII, p.811.
  - (15) Ibed Series 11, Vol. VIII, p.811.
  - (16) Vol. 11, P.189.
  - (17) Little Brown & Company 1917, P.353.
  - (18) Confederate Operations in Canada and New York, by Headley, p.217-219.
  - (19) These Commissioners were Jacob Thompson, who had been a member of President Buchanan's Cabinet as Secretary of the Interior and Clement Clay, Jr., an ex-United States Senator from Alabama. Serving under these two were Beverly Tucker, a Virginian, who had been U.S. Consul at Liverpool at the outbreak of the war, George N. Sanders, a Kentuckian and an ex-United States Consul at London, who returned in 1861 and became a member of the Confederate Secret Service, and Wm. C. Cleary, who had been a Kentucky State Legislator before the war. Rhodes Vol. V, p.330.

*A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital by J.B. Jones Philadelphia J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1866*

7 1/2

(24) (Addition to Note 24.)

The New York Tribune of May 6, 1865, says that Pomeroy "during the war publicly advised and incited the assassination of Mr. Lincoln."

(25) The confession of Samuel B Arnold was made April 18, 1865 in the office of Marshall McPhail at Baltimore. It was made voluntarily by Arnold who had just been brought in under arrest.

- (20) Confederate Operations, Headley, p.230.
- (21) ~~Ibid, p. 256.~~ "From the first Mr. Lincoln responded to all applications for his interposition, 'General Dix may dispose of the case as he pleases - I will not interfere'". Confederate Operations, Headley, pp. 361.
- (22) Miss Rutherford's Scrap Book, Athens, Georgia, January 1924 and the Southern Historical Society Papers, Vol. 32, p.99-101.
- (23) In Booth's diary in possession of the War Department, entry of April 21, 1865, is the statement: "I knew no private wrong. I struck for my country and that alone." This would hardly be consistent with the unsubstantiated tales that Booth went to the President the night before the execution and plead for Beall's life. Beall's diary was edited and the story of his life written by Daniel B. Lucas, an attorney of Richmond, a friend and schoolmate of Beall and subsequently a United States Senator and Judge of the U.S. Supreme Court of West Virginia. While Beall was awaiting execution, Lucas was turning heaven and earth to save him. Isaac Markens, a writer who became deeply interested in Beall's case and has thoroughly investigated every phase of it, states that on the night preceding Beall's execution, two parties called on Lincoln in Beall's behalf, the first composed of Montgomery Blair who had been Postmaster General in Lincoln's Cabinet, and Mrs. John S. Gittings, wife of a Baltimore banker and railroad president and a friend of the Lincolns. This party called early in the evening and later the same night, John W. Forney, Republican editor, Washington McLean, Democrat editor and Roger A. Pryor, a Confederate General who had met Beall while a fellow prisoner in Ft. Lafayette, called on the same mission. Both visits were fruitless. To the second gathering, Lincoln showed a telegram from General Dix saying that Beall's execution was necessary for the security of the community. The Booth-Beall alleged connection was brought to Forney's attention in 1876 and branded as false. (President Lincoln and the Case of John Y. Beall" by Isaac Markens - 1911 and "My Day! Reminiscences of a Long Life" by Mrs Roger A. Pryor - P.250-251, Macmillan 1909).
- (24) "Crowding Memories" by Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, p.60.
- (24) Isaac Markens "President Lincoln and the Case of John Y. Beall", P.11.
- (24a) *The Spy of the Rebellion, by Allan Pinkerton p.62*
- (25) Baltimore American, January 18, 1869.
- (26) Perley's Reminiscences, *by Ben Perley Poore* Vol. 11, P.185.
- (27) Twice during June of that summer, the 10th and 29th, Booth while on his way to the oil regions had been a guest at the McHenry House, Meadville, Pa. Sometime later there was discovered scratched on the window of one of the hotel rooms the inscription "Abe Lincoln departed this life August 13, 1864 by the effects of poison" but nothing was thought of the writing until after the tragic event of the following April, when it was circumstantially ascribed to Booth and thought to have been in the nature of a prophecy. Research fails to establish any connection between Booth and the inscription. The story is discussed pro and con in Baker's History <sup>of the</sup> Secret Service, P. 547-8 - Four Lincoln Conspiracies by Victor Louis Mason, Century Magazine, April 1896 and "The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, by David Miller DeWitt", P.259-260.
- (28) Abraham Lincoln and the Union, P.258 - Nathaniel Wright Stephenson - Chronicles of America, Vol. 29.
- (29) Conspiracy Trial Reports by Pittman, P.45.



Samuel B. Arnold stated in his Confession "The Richmond Authorities, as far as I know, knew nothing of the Conspiracy"

(30) Ibed P.38-39.

(31) If Booth went to Canada to communicate his plan to the Confederate agents there and obtain official sanction, he failed, for John Surratt, one of the conspirators, four years later in his Rockville lecture said that he and Booth had discussed the advisability of consulting Richmond. This discussion however, took place some weeks after Booth's Canadian trip. Tucker and Cleary, associated in Canada with Thompson, in a letter published in the Montreal Gazette, May 4, 1865, claimed that they had never heard of Booth, and Tucker said that he was not even in Montreal during the time Booth was alleged to have been there. In Booth's trunk at the National Hotel, two secret cipher letters were found which were deciphered by a key that had been taken from the Richmond office of Judah P. Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State. C.T. P.41. The letters, however, threw no light whatever on the kidnapping or assassination plots.

also Testimony Thomas T. Eckert asst. Secy of War. Imp. Inv. P675

(32) C.T. P.45-46. Testimony of Robert Anson Campbell, first teller of the Ontario Bank of Montreal.

(33) There has been considerable dispute as to the final disposition of Booth's wardrobe. A special dispatch to the Boston Sunday Herald from Montreal, November 14, 1891, stated "Antiquarian W.W. Snaith has obtained conclusive evidence that the trunks found on the schooner Marie Victoria which was wrecked at Bic in the autumn of 1864, were the property of J. Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln."

"During the following summer (1865) there appeared in the Quebec-Morning Chronicle of July 17 an advertisement stating that on the following day there would be sold at auction various effects landed from the Schooner Marie Victoria, consisting of dry goods, theatrical costumes, swords and various other articles.

"Snaith was engaged in business in Quebec at the time and having a penchant for the collection of relics and other curios, attended the sale and purchased part of the wardrobe. Geo. Rankin, also purchased a variety of things from the stock of articles offered for sale, it was thought at the time, for his brother, McKee Rankin, the actor.

"The following notice of the sale appeared in the Chronicle of July 19, 1865:

"The theatrical wardrobe of the late John Wilkes Booth, recovered about a month ago from the wreck of the schooner Marie Victoria at Bic, last autumn, was disposed of by decree of the vice-admiralty court by public auction yesterday forenoon. Among the wardrobe, which unfortunately had been injured by salt water, there was a splendid collection of theatrical clothes in fine silk velvets, silks, satins, ermine and crimson, and also hats, caps, plumes, boots, buskin shoes, etc. In swords and pistols there was a case or trunk packed with a large variety and there were some very beautifully mounted ones among them. Competition on the whole, was very spirited, and several articles were sold at high prices. The amount realized for the wardrobe in its damaged state was about \$500. The original cost cannot have been less than \$15,000!"

In a story by Otis Skinner in the American Magazine for November 1908, there is described the burning of these costumes by Edwin Booth personally in 1873, but this was disputed by the actor, McKee Rankin, referred to above,

who says in an interview, reported in a Boston paper, that his brother George Rankin, purchased the costumes for him and that he then sold them in 1866 through another actor, Barton Hill, to Edwin Booth who stored them in The Winter Garden Theatre which burned in 1866 and that among the things destroyed was John Wilkes' wardrobe.

(34) The "Address" is as follows:

"----- 1864.

" My Dear Sir:-

" You may use this as you think best. But as some may wish to know when, who and why, and as I know not how to direct, I give it (in the words of your master) "To whom it may concern":

" Right or wrong, God judge me, not man. For be my motive good or bad, of one thing I am sure, the lasting condemnation of the North.

" I love peace more than life. Have loved the Union beyond expression. For four years I have waited, hoped, and prayed for the dark clouds to break, for the restoration of our former sunshine. To wait longer would be a crime. All hope for peace is dead. My prayers have proved as idle as my hopes. God's will be done. I go to see and share the bitter end.

" I have ever held the South were right. The very nomination of Abraham Lincoln, four years ago, spoke plainly of war - war upon Southern rights and institutions. His election proved it. "Await an overt act". Yes, till you are bound and plundered. What folly. The South was not wise. Who thinks of arguments and patience when the finger of his enemy presses on the trigger? In a foreign war, I too, could say, "country, right or wrong." But in a struggle such as ours (where the brother tries to pierce the brother's heart) for God's sake, choose the right. When a country like this spurns justice from her side she forfeits the allegiance of every honest freeman, and should leave him untrammelled by any fealty soever, to act as his conscience may approve.

" People of the North, to hate tyranny, to love liberty and justice, to strike at wrong and oppression, was the teaching of our fathers. The study of our early history will not let me forget this, and may it never.

" This country was formed for the white, not for the black, man. And looking upon African slavery from the same standpoint held by the noble framers of our Constitution, I, for one, have considered it one of the greatest blessings (both for themselves and us) that God ever bestowed upon a favored nation. Witness heretofore our wealth and power, witness their elevation and enlightenment above their race elsewhere. I have lived among it most of my life, and have seen less harsh treatment from master to man than I have beheld in the North from father to son. Yet heaven knows, no one would be more willing to do for the Negro race than I, could I but see a way to better their condition.

" But Lincoln's policy is only preparing the way for their total annihilation. The South are not, nor have then been, fighting for the continuation of slavery. The first battle of Bull Run did away with that idea. Their causes since the war have been noble and greater far than those that urged our fathers on. Even should we allow they were wrong at the beginning of this contest, cruelty and injustice have made the wrong become right, and they stand now, (before the wonder and admiration of the world) as noble band of patriotic heroes. Hereafter, reading of their deeds, Thermopylae would be forgotten.

" When I aided in the capture and execution of John Brown (who was a murderer on our western border, and who was fairly tried and convicted before

an impartial judge<sup>and jury</sup> of treason, and who, by the way has since been made a god), I was proud of my little share in the transaction, for I deemed it my duty, and that I was helping our common country to perform an act of justice. But what was a crime in John Brown is now considered (by themselves) as the greatest and only virtue of the whole Republican party. Strange transmigration! Vice to become a virtue, simply because more indulge in it.

"I thought then, as now, that the Abolitionists were the only traitors in the land, and that the entire party deserved the same fate of poor old Brown; not because they wished to abolish slavery, but on account of the means they have ever used to effect that abolition. If Brown were living I doubt whether he himself would set slavery against the Union. Most, or many, in the North do, and openly curse the Union, if the South are to return and retain a single right guaranteed by every tie which we once revered as sacred. The South can make no choice. It is either extermination or slavery for themselves (worse than death) to draw from. I know no choice.

"I have also studied hard to discover upon what grounds the right of a state to secede has been denied, when our very name, United States, and the Declaration of Independence, both provide for secession. But there is no time for words - I write in haste. I know how foolish I shall be deemed for undertaking such a step as this, where, on the one side, I have many friends and everything to make me happy; where my profession alone has gained me an income of more than twenty thousand dollars a year, and where my great personal ambition has such a great field for labor. On the other hand, the South have never bestowed upon me one kind word; a place where I have no friends, except beneath the sod; a place where I must become either a private soldier or a beggar... To give up all of the former, besides my mother and sisters, whom I love so dearly (although they so widely differ from me in opinion), seems insane, but God is my judge. I love justice more than I do a country that disowns it; more than fame and wealth; more (heaven pardon me if ~~X~~ wrong) than a happy home. I have never been upon a battlefield; but, O my countrymen! could you all but see the reality or effects of this horrid war, as I have seen them (in every state, save Virginia) I know you would think like me, and would pray the Almighty to create in the Northern mind the sense of right and justice (even should it possess no seasoning of mercy), and that He would dry up this sea of blood between us, which is daily growing wider. Alas, poor country, is she to meet her threatened doom?

"Four years ago I would have given a thousand lives to see her remain (as I had always known her) powerful and unbroken. And even now I would hold my life as naught to see her what she was. O my friends! if the fearful scenes of the past four years had never been enacted, or if what had been, had been but a frightful dream from which we could now awake, with what overflowing of hearts could we bless our God and pray for his continued favor. How I have loved the old flag can never now be known. A few years since and the entire world could boast of none so pure and spotless. But I have of late been seeing and hearing of the bloody deeds of which she has been made the emblem, and would shudder to think how changed she has grown. Oh how I have longed to see her break from the mist of blood and death that circles around her folds, spoiling her beauty and tarnishing her honor! But no, day by day she has been dragged deeper and deeper into cruelty and oppression, till now (in my eyes) her once bright-red stripes look like bloody gashes on the face of heaven. I look now upon my early admiration of her glories as a dream. My love (as things stand today) is for the South alone. Nor do I deem it a dishonor in attempting to make a prisoner of this man, to whom she owes so much of her misery. If success attends me, I go penniless to her side. They say she has found that "last ditch" which the North have so long derided.

and been endeavoring to force her in, forgetting they are our brothers, and that it's impolitic to goad an enemy to madness. Should I reach her in safety and find it true, I will proudly beg permission to triumph or die in that same "ditch" by her side.

"A Confederate Doing Duty Upon His Own Responsibility,

"J. WILKES BOOTH."

(See sworn statement of J.S. Clarke, the brother-in-law of John Wilkes Booth, dated May 6, 1865, in The Evening Star, Washington, D.C., April 20, 1865; The New York Tribune and the Philadelphia Enquirer, same date.)

When the legends of Booth's escape broke out anew in the spring of 1925, this letter which had been so widely published in the newspapers of 1865 and printed or quoted in almost every book dealing with the Assassination, was again printed by at least one large metropolitan newspaper as a scoop - under the heading "Booth Letter, Suppressed 60 Years, Bared." The story claimed that the government had been interested in suppressing the letter and that it had been preserved only by having been copied from the confidential records by a secret service agent.

*In view of the fact that it appeared in nearly every large newspaper in the country at the time and has been quoted and reprinted in most of the books dealing with the assassination.*