

THE CAPTURE

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Chapter 10.

THE CAPTURE

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The troops, as has been described (1) previously, proceeded down the river to Belle Plain where they disembarked about ten o'clock the evening of April 24th and marched toward the Rappahannock. (2)

Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker took the lead, Colonel Conger having stated that he was acquainted with the country and knew the direction they wished to ^{take} go. These two officers kept in advance of the command about a half mile and under assumed names made calls, inquiring the way. In order to gather information of Booth and Herold, they claimed to the residents along the road that they had been separated from a party with which they had crossed the Potomac; that they were being pursued by the Yankees and wished to find the remainder of their own comrades. They also rode up to some farm houses and questioned the inmates, pretending to be in search of two of their party, one of whom was lame. They retained these characters until daylight and according to Lieutenant Baker, made fifteen or twenty calls during the night. (3)

The command under Lieutenant Doherty remained at a convenient distance, and communicated with the detective officers through some orderlies. At daylight Conger and Baker threw off the characters and the calvacade breakfasted at a Dr. Ashton's, who lived near the Rappahannock River. The posse then separated, Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker taking a small detachment of soldiers with them, while the remainder went with Lieutenant Doherty. About four o'clock that afternoon, (Tuesday, ^{the} 25th,) they met at Port Conway on the Rappahannock River, and while allowing the horses and soldiers to rest, the officers went into the yard of a man by the name of Turner for refreshments. (4) Then it was decided to ascertain, if possible, whether ^{the assassins} ~~Booth and Herold~~ had been seen or heard of in that village.

At the ferry, photographs of Booth and Herold were shown to ^{Jim Thornton,} the negro operator, who said that men answering the description had crossed the day before.

Rollins, the fisherman-ferry owner, who later was cited in Lieutenant

Doherty's official report for his willingness to impart all the information he possessed, was seen sitting with his wife by the door of their house four or five rods from the ferry. When questioned he gave further details about two men brought to the ferry the day before by "Charley Lucas, a negro boy." One of the two men was lame, caused, Rollins said, one of the "brothers" had claimed, by a wound received "at Petersburg." The pictures of Booth and Herold were shown to Rollins and he identified that of Booth as "the lame man" and that of Herold as "the small man who carried the carbine." He said that the lame man, however, had no mustache.

(5)

Rollins also told the officers that the men had shown great anxiety to get across the river and had offered to pay him extra if he would transport them in his small boat rather than wait for the ferry. Rollins, however, refused to do this since he was using the boat "putting out his fishing nets." He finally had agreed, he said, to take the man on to Bowling Green for ten dollars, but about this time, three Confederate soldiers came up and Herold, after talking with them, notified him that he had met "an old schoolmate and they were going to ride in 'twain!'" The party, Rollins stated, after crossing the river had set out "toward Bowling Green."

Mrs. Rollins amplified her husband's story by saying that the Confederates were Captain Jett and Lieutenants Ruggles and Bainbridge and she also knew that Captain Jett was "courting a young lady by the name of Goldman, whose father kept a hotel at Bowling Green."

In the meantime the horses and men had been ferried across and about six o'clock that afternoon, the entire detachment moved on toward Bowling Green with Rollins as guide. He had been put under arrest at his own request so as to avert the criticism of his neighbors, that "he was a Yankee spy." Although enquiry along the route disclosed that some of the pursued had been at the house of a Mrs. Clark the night before, the detachment pushed on to Bowling Green without calling on her.

Arriving on the outskirts of their destination at eleven o'clock that

night, according to Lieutenant Doherty's story, the command dismounted and the three officers, taking six or eight men with Rollins as guide, rushed to Goldman's House. "To surround it was but the work of a moment, and all egress was prevented." One of the officers knocked loudly on the front door, and after some hesitation Mrs. Goldman responded with a candle in her hand. The whereabouts of Jett was demanded and Mrs. Goldman led the way "up one flight of stairs," and as the officers entered, Jett, half dressed, sprang from his bed. Mrs. Goldman's son, lying on a bed in the same room, did not move. He was examined and found to be "suffering from wounds." Jett admitted his identity and was threatened with death if he did not tell where Booth and Herold were hidden. "He commenced crying," stated Doherty, "and said he would tell all he knew; that he had left Booth at the Garrett House three miles from Port Royal, the evening before, and that he would willingly guide me there. He said his horse was in the stable, and I had it saddled, placing him on it, with his feet bound to the horse's girth. The reins were given to one of my men to lead the horse, and I placed a guard with drawn pistol on either side of him."

The main portion of the command was rejoined and Lieutenant Doherty says that it was with some difficulty that he aroused the tired and hungry soldiers, and turning to Rollins said, "now ride ahead with me." Placing Jett immediately behind, Lieutenant Doherty ordered Sergeant Corbett to "ride ^{in the rear} behind" and see that no man falls out of the ranks." The detachment then rode twelve miles back to the Garrett place and when they reached the fence of the orchard surrounding the house, Doherty says that he "dismounted and in company with Rollins and the detectives" took a survey of the premises, ordered the fence to be taken down, the gate to be opened, tolled off six men as a patrol in rear of all out buildings in the field, and gave out the countersign of "Boston" with orders to fire on any one not halting when challenged." The patrol having gained the field, he "moved the command quietly up to the front of the house," and had "the whole premises surrounded, with no possible means of escape."

In the last chapter we left Garrett, senior, with the officers, demanding the whereabouts of Booth and Herold. Mr. Garrett continues his New York Herald letter

with the statement that,

"The officer said I was not telling them the truth, and called for a rope and said they would hang me. Being thus rudely treated, I no doubt appeared scared and affrighted. About this time my son, John M., came to the door and said to the officers that these men were in the tobacco house. They put me under guard and carried my son with them to the tobacco house, and made him go in and try to bring the men out. When he went in he addressed Booth as 'Mr. Boyd,' as the officers said, and told him there was a large force surrounding the house, and he had better surrender. He ordered my son out, and appeared to be drawing a pistol, and he ran out. The officer then parleyed with the men inside for some time, when Herold expressed a wish to surrender, and Booth said to the officer that the man in here wishes to come out. The officer told him to hand his arms to one of them, I believe to my son at the door, and to come out. Booth said the man had no arms; they were all his, and they would not be delivered up. Herold then came out, and Booth refusing to surrender, Colonel Conger ordered the house fired to force

him out. When he gave these orders Booth said to him, 'Don't destroy the gentleman's property; he is entirely innocent, and does not know who I am.' The house was then fired, after which Sergeant Corbet shot Booth, and he was brought out and died on my porch.

"It was not until after Booth was shot that we were told who he was; we had no idea that they were the murderers of the President. When the forces passed my house they went to Bowling Green and got Jett, the man who brought Booth to my house, and he told them that he left Booth at my house. When he came here I asked him why he brought that man to my house and left him here as a wounded Confederate soldier, and had brought so much trouble upon me. He said he wished to get clear of him, and left him at the first house he came to after leaving Port Royal; that he had told the officers when they came to Bowling Green, that he had left him with me as a Confederate soldier,

and that I was not apprised who he was.

The events and scenes at the Garrett tobacco barn in the early morning hours of Wednesday, April 26, have been briefly told from the statement of Richard Garrett. They are, however, described more in detail by the officers of the expedition and it is from the official report of Lieutenant Doherty, (6) his testimony under oath at the Conspiracy trial (7); the testimony, also under oath, of Colonel Conger at the Conspiracy Trial (8); the Surratt Trial (9) and the Impeachment Investigation (10); the testimony under oath of Lieutenant L.B. Baker at the Impeachment Investigation ^{and the Surratt Trial} (11); the testimony under oath of Sergeant Boston Corbett, ^{at the Conspiracy Trial} (12); and the statement of ^{other} members of the Garrett family, that the following account is given.

of John Garrett, the eldest son, the testimony under oath at the Surratt trial (12 1/2)

Since a comparison of the statements shows that L. B. Baker's is probably clearest, we shall follow his testimony indicating in the text and notes where the details given by others explain or amplify what he says -

When the Garrett boys came up to the house and disclosed the whereabouts of Booth and Herold, the officers, supposing that they were accomplices, ordered them taken in charge. The party then surrounded the barn where the assassins were imprisoned.

Jack Garrett told Lieutenant Baker, according to the latter's testimony, that he had locked Booth and Herold in "for he supposed they were desperate cases, and did not know what crimes they had been guilty of."

"I told him," testified Baker, that "he must go into the barn and demand their surrender and the surrender of their arms. He protested that he knew nothing of them and that he was afraid to go in. I told him he must go in, and I shoved him in. Then I heard a low conversation in the barn, and heard some one, whom I supposed to be Booth, say: "Damn you, for you have betrayed me." Then he said, "Get out of here."

Jack Garrett when he went in, according to Willie H, ^{his brother,} approached the point where Booth and Herold were and said, "The soldiers are here after you and they want you to surrender. If you don't come out they threaten to burn the barn and destroy all our property." "Brother Jack tried to argue with him as to the uselessness of resistance," stated the younger brother and "appealed to Booth to prevent the destruction of our property. Booth became very violent and my brother came out and repeated to the officer that Booth's only reply had been a threat to kill him." (13)

"Garrett," testified Baker, "came back to the door and said, 'Let me out, he is going to shoot me.' I said, 'You cannot come out till you bring out the arms.' He said, 'He will not let me have them; let me out quick.' I opened the door, and he dodged out as though he was afraid Booth was going to shoot him. I shut the door very quickly, fearing that Booth might make a break from the door. Then young Garrett said, 'Captain, I will do anything for you, except to go in there again. He is desperate, and will shoot me.' Colonel Conger came up and we decided to dismount our men. He had decided to fire the barn, and therefore we had to dismount the men because the horses would not stand the fire. That

occupied half an hour, for we had to dismount the men two by two, so as not to leave the line unguarded. I remarked to Conger that I would make the proposition for Booth to **surrender**. That being agreed upon, I addressed those who were in the barn -- told them that we had fifty men around the barn, all armed, and demanded their surrender."

"In the meantime," testified Conger, "I requested one of the Garretts to pile some brush up against the corner of the barn - pine boughs. He put some up there, and after awhile came to me and said: 'This man inside says that if I put any more brush in there he will put a ball through me.' 'Very well,' said I, 'you need not go there again.'

According to W.H. Garrett, after his brother Jack came out of the barn, both of them were placed by the officers a short distance away with a light set directly in front of them. "Two men were placed to guard us," said Garrett, "with instructions that the first time Booth fired upon any of the party they should immediately shoot us. Booth, who had been watching the operation through a crack in the barn, heard the order of the officer for our execution, shouted at the top of his voice:-

"That is unfair; those men are innocent. These people do not know who I am!"

"The officer then revoked the order." (14)

"Was it a fact that you had fifty men?" asked the Congressman questioning Lieutenant Baker at the Impeachment Investigation.

A. We had but twenty-five, but I made the number larger in order to intimidate them. The first that I heard said was, "Well, Captain, that is damned hard. This man is an innocent man, and it is hard to burn his barn. Give a lame man a chance. Draw up your men before the door, and I will come out and fight the whole command." I told him we did not come there to fight him, but to take him prisoner--that we had him, and that he had better surrender like a man. He then said, "Give me five minutes to consider." I said, "Very well." I waited for what I thought was five minutes. Then I said I could wait no longer and that the time for action had come. Then he said, "Captain, there is a man here who wants very much to surrender." I said, "Very well, let him hand out his arms that he brought across the river." (I had ascertained that Herold had carried a carbine.) I then unlocked the door--keeping the lock in the hasp-- and told Booth

that the man could come out, provided he brought a carbine and one pistol. Then I heard a conversation between the parties inside, and heard Booth cursing Herold, telling him to go, that he did not want him to remain, and calling him a damned coward. (15) Then Herold came to the door and rapped, and said, "Let me out, quick; I do not know-

anything about this man, he is a desperate character, and is going to shoot me."

I said, "You cannot come out until you bring your arms." He said, "He will not let me." Then Booth said, "Captain, the arms are mine, and I shall keep them. This man is guilty of no crime." Conger came up and said I had better let him out, that he would be one less to fight. I opened the door and Herold came out.

Captain Doherty, who had charge of the cavalry, soon came up and took him in charge. I put my back against the door again, and put the lock on. Then Conger said, "Let us fire the barn immediately." Then I addressed the person in the barn, and told him we should fire the barn in two minutes if he did not come out. He again made the proposition to come out and fight the whole command, and said, "Captain, I consider you to be a brave and honorable man; I have had half a dozen opportunities to shoot you, but I did not do it."

Q. Did he know you?

A. No; but he called me "Captain" supposing I had charge of the party. There were no names mentioned at all. I repeated that we did not come to fight him but to take him, and that we should take him. I had been holding a candle in my hand until after Herold came out, when Conger said it was presumptuous in me to hold the candle, as Booth might shoot me. I set the candle down about twenty feet from the door. We failed to make any soldiers stand in the light of the candle; but Garrett and I were there all the time. I knew that Booth intended to shoot anyone who made any approach to the barn to fire it, but we did not expect to do it there. Finally, I told him we should wait no longer. Then he said, "Well, my brave boys, you can prepare a stretcher for me." Conger came to me and said, "We will fire the barn." I said, "Yes, the quicker the better." When Conger was firing the barn, the last words that Booth said were, "One more stain on the old banner." I opened the door quickly, and the first I saw of Booth he was

leaning against a hay mow, with a crutch under each arm, and a carbine resting in this way at his hip. He was in the act of getting up from the hay. He did get up, and dropped one crutch, and started toward the fire.

Conger says (16) that he had gone around to the corner of the barn, "pulled some hay out, twisted up a little of it, about six inches long, set fire to it, and stuck it back through on top of the hay. It was loose, broken-up hay, that had been trodden upon the barn floor. It was very light and blazed very rapidly - lit right up at once."

"I put my eye up to the crack," continued the Colonel, "next to the one the fire was put through, and looked in, and I heard some thing drop on the floor, which I supposed to be Booth's crutch. He turned around toward me. When I first got a glimpse of him, he stood with his back partly to me, turning toward the front door. He came back within five feet of the corner of the barn. The only thing I noticed he had in his hands when he came was a carbine.

" He came back and looked along the cracks, one after another, rapidly. He could not see anything. He looked at the fire, and from the expression on his face, I am satisfied he looked to see if he could put it out, and was satisfied that he could not do it; it was burning so much. He dropped his arm, relaxed his muscles, turned around, and started for the door at the front of the barn. I ran around to the other side, and when about half round I heard the report of a pistol."

Baker testified that when Booth started toward the fire that he got within six or eight feet of the side of the barn, and peered all about as though he should like to see who fired the barn, having the carbine poised. Then he seemed to give it up. It was an old tobacco house, and there was a table lying bottom side up. He turned to throw the table on the fire, but he dropped it, and turned to look around the barn. The fire was rolling over the roof. He saw the door open, and he turned and dropped the other crutch and started toward the door.

"How started?" was the inquiry of the questioner.

A. "With a kind of limping, halting jump. He used his leg, instead of the crutch. The last two or three steps he took were on his leg. He came within twelve feet of the door, when I heard the report of a shot. I was then standing outside of the door, waiting for him to come out."

Q. "Were you nearer to him than anyone else?"

A. "Yes, sir."

Q. "Who shot him?"

A. "I learned afterward it was Sergeant Corbett. He shot him through a crevice in the barn. Booth was just between Corbett and me; and it was remarked afterward that if he had missed Booth, he might have shot me. There were strict orders given against shooting at all. Colonel Conger had given every man the order, a number of times, not to shoot, under any circumstances."

Q. "What was Booth doing at the time he was shot?"

A. "Booth was in the act of coming toward the door, with a carbine in one hand and a pistol in the other."

"Where was he shot?" Lieutenant Baker was asked.

A. "Through the neck. The bullet perforated both sides of his collar. He gave a spring when he was shot, and fell down. I jumped in, and while I was getting to him he partly turned over and appeared as though he was going to get up again. I caught him by his arms and went down on him (Lieutenant Doherty also claims the honor of being the first to Booth), I did not know that he was mortally wounded, and I thought I would secure him, but I soon saw he was powerless. Conger came in; I turned up the wounded man's head and said, "It is Booth, certainly." I supposed, at the time that Conger shot him, and I said, "What on earth did you shoot him for?" Said he, "I did not shoot him." Then the idea flashed on my mind that if he did, it had better not be known. I turned again and said, "All right." Said he, "I did not shoot him." "Well," said I, "The man who did goes back under arrest."

"I went right to the door," stated Col. Conger on the witness stand, "and went into the barn and found Lieutenant Baker looking at Booth, holding him or raising him up, I do not know which. I said to him, 'He shot himself?' Said he,

'No, he did not either.' Said I, 'Whereabouts is he shot-- in the head or neck?' I raised him then, and looked on the right side of the neck, and saw a place where the blood was running out. I said, 'Yes, sir, he shot himself.' Lieutenant Baker replied very earnestly that he did not. I then said, 'Let us carry him out of here; this will soon be burning.'"

"All this took place very quickly," continued Lieutenant Baker, "I picked up the carbine which Booth had dropped. The pistol he grasped in one hand so tightly that I had to twist to get it out. I took the pistol. ^{Lieutenant} Captain Doherty came in and took the carbine and a knife out of Booth's belt. At that time Garrett rushed in, and said, "Boys, let us extinguish this fire." The soldiers ran and threw furniture and stuff on the fire, but it was too late. Then Colonel Conger, myself and two soldiers carried Booth out of the barn and laid him by a tree."

"We took him up" said Col. Conger, "and carried him out on the grass, underneath the locust trees, a little way from the door. I went back into the barn immediately to see if the fire could be put down, and tried somewhat myself to put it out but I could not; it was burning so fast and there was no water and nothing to help with. I then went back. Before this, I supposed him to be dead. He had all the appearance of a dead man; but when I got back to him, his eyes and mouth were moving."

"I had a cup in my pocket," Lieutenant Baker continued, "and I took it out and called for some water. I took Booth's head upon my knee and threw some water in his face. His mouth being open I poured some in his mouth. He blew it out and opened his eyes. I gave him some more water and he made his lips go as though he would say something. Conger was there and put his ear to Booth's lips. He said, "Tell mother," and then he swooned away again. Conger left, and Booth shortly came to again. I was washing his face all the time. He said, in a whisper, "Tell mother I die for my country." Then I saw his wound. That was the first time I saw it. I saw that he was shot in the neck. The wound did not bleed, and I did not know the nature of it. The fire was then burning rapidly, and it became so warm that we had to take him away. We carried him to the piazza of the house.

"You were the first person with Booth after he fell?" Lieutenant Baker was asked.

A. "Yes."

Q. "Did he speak before anyone else came up?"

A. "No, sir; he made no audible sounds at all till he was taken out of the barn."

And after some further questioning Lieutenant Baker was asked:

"While he was under the tree, did you sit down by him and hold him against your breast?"

A. "I did."

Q. "Did he say anything to you there?"

A. "Only what I have stated in regard to telling his mother. Conger detected before I did that he wanted to speak. He put his ear to Booth's mouth, and Booth said, 'Tell mother.' After that he said the same, with this addition, that he died for his country."

Q. Did he repeat it more than once?

A. He said it after he got to the piazza.

Q. Who carried him to the piazza?

A. Colonel Conger and myself, assisted by one or two soldiers.

Q. After he was carried to the piazza what did you do with him?

A. I called for some water. The Garrett girls got some water and ice in a cup, and some cloths. Colonel Conger tore open Booth's collar and took a diamond pin out of his undershirt, ⁽¹⁷⁾ and fixed him so that I could wash him. I then saw that the ball had passed through his neck. I washed the wound, and washed his face. He opened his eyes and seemed to realize what was going on. The first words he uttered were, "Kill me, oh kill me." I said, "No, Booth." When I said "Booth," he seemed surprised, opened his eyes, and looked about. It had begun to be daylight then. The sun was rising, I said, "No, Booth, we do not wish to kill you;" that we hoped his wound was not mortal, and that he might yet live. He repeated the request that I should kill him. Then Conger came. He was kneeling down on one side of him and I on the other side.

at this point
According to Conger, Booth wanted to be turned on his face. I said to him, 'You cannot lie on your face,' and he wanted to be turned on his side; we turned him upon his side three times, I think, but he could not lie with any comfort, and wanted to be turned immediately back. He asked me to put my hand on his throat, and press down, which I did, and he said, 'Harder.' I pressed down as hard as I thought necessary, and he made very strong exertions to cough but was unable to do so - no muscular exertion could he make. I supposed he thought something was in his throat, and I said to him, 'Open your mouth and put out your tongue, and I will see if it bleeds.' Which he did. I said to him, 'There is no blood in your throat; it has not gone through any part of it there.' He repeated two or three times, 'Kill me, kill me.' The reply was made to him. 'We don't want to kill you; we want you to get well.'

"I spoke to Conger," testified Lieut. Baker, "in reference to Captain Jett, from whom we got the information at Bowling Green, fifteen miles beyond, that he had piloted Booth and Herold over the river. When I mentioned Jett's name Booth opened his eyes and said, "Did Jett betray me?" Then I saw that I was making unnecessary developments, and I said, "Oh, never mind anything about Jett." He seemed to be paralyzed below the wound. His hands lay by his sides. He said, "My hands." I took up one of his hands and washed it in ice-water. He looked at it and said, "Useless, useless," and he dropped it. The first thing he said after we got him on the piazza was to repeat the request that we should tell his mother he died for his country, and that he had done what he thought was for the best. This he said in a low whisper." (Rollins, as well as Jett, was also with the party. Made no protest that party was not Booth.) Questioned as to where Booth lay when death came, Baker said; He died leaning against a mattress which the girls of the Garrett house got and laid on the piazza. We doubled it up and laid his head upon it.

"Q. Have you stated all that you remember he said during that time?

"A. I have, substantially. I may not have stated all that he said, or the order in which he said it.

Q. "And he did not say anything about not intending to do it until the day before it was done?"

A. "He never made any such remark. While we were getting the diary out of his pocket, and turning him over so as to get at it--Conger being anxious to get to Washington as soon as possible--Booth groaned and said: 'Oh, kill me.' He saw what we were doing."

Q. "What articles were taken from Booth's body?"

A. "I took a pocket compass which had candle-drops all around it outside. It was a common pocket compass, and appeared to have been used in the night with a candle." (18) This was the compass Booth had used to steer by while crossing the Potomac on the previous Friday night. (18½)

"I took a meerschauum pipe," continued Lieutenant Baker in his testimony, "a bunch of matches, and quite a handful of shavings, which he seemed to have whittled up at leisure to start a fire with some time, and a handkerchief rather soiled. Conger took the diary, a pin from his undershirt (it seemed to be a diamond pin, with some initials on it) and, I think, a pocket knife."

In the diary were "the photographs of five lovely women" which today may be found with it in the secret archives of the War Department. (19) From his leather belt they ^{also} drew the "Sic Semper Tyrannis" dirk which he "so tragically brandished upon the stage," and upon its blade was a stain which Baker thought was the blood of Major Rathbone. ~~This knife, his carbine and two pistols, also taken from his person, Conger carried to Washington.~~ (20)

Dr. Urquehart of Port Royal had been sent for but did not arrive until a few minutes before Booth's death. A stray curl, Miss Holloway stated, had fallen over her fingers while she stroked Booth's head. At her request, the doctor cut this off, and Miss Holloway still had part of it as a memento at the time her statement was published in 1897. (21)

Dr. Urquehart also, according to Miss Holloway, examined Booth's wounded leg and declared that decomposition had set in and that he could not have lived twenty-four hours, if he had not been killed.

"Did Colonel Conger leave before Booth died?" Lieutenant Baker was asked.

A. "Yes; he left for Washington with Booth's effects tied in a handkerchief. I assisted him in taking the things out of Booth's pockets. The pockets that were on my side I cleared, and he those on his side. He spread his handkerchief and put them all in, ordered his horse and left. That was about ten or fifteen minutes before Booth died. Conger says, however, that he did not get away from the grounds for about ten or fifteen minutes after that, but I did not see him any more." (22)

During Booth's death agonies Herold had been tied to a big locust tree in front of the Garrett house where he "whined and complained that the rope was cutting his hands." He was released and then retied with his hands behind him.

"After Booth was laid on the piazza of the house," testified Lieutenant Baker, "I asked Colonel Conger if he had found the man who shot him. He said, 'No, but I will!' He went away and came back, and I said, 'Where is the man?' He answered in a laughing way, 'I guess we had better let Providence and the Secretary of War take care of him!' After that I learned from Lieutenant Doherty that Conger had found the man, and had asked him what in hell he shot for, without orders, and that Sergeant Corbett took the position of a soldier, saluted the Colonel, and said: 'Colonel, Providence directed me.' That rather nonplussed the Colonel, and he had nothing more to say." (23)

Sergeant Boston Corbett of the Cavalry Detachment, when reprimanded, explained, (24) "I saw him (Booth) make a movement toward the door. I supposed he was going to fight his way out. One of the men, who was watching him, told me that he aimed the carbine at me. He was taking aim with the carbine, but at whom I could not say. My mind was upon him attentively to see that he did no harm, and when I became impressed that it was time I shot him. I took steady aim on my arm, and shot him through a large crack in the barn."

After making certain Booth was dead, the officers borrowed needles and

thread from the Garretts and sewed him up in a saddle blanket. Ned Freeman, an old Negro living in the vicinity, had a horse. To this was harnessed a ramshackle wagon. The corpse was tied with ropes around the legs and made fast to the wagon. In this rickety vehicle the body of John Wilkes Booth journeyed back again to the Potomac River.

BOSTON CORBETT.

There has been considerable discussion as to whether Sergeant Corbett shot Booth with a pistol or a carbine and it also has been claimed that Booth committed suicide, this idea originating possibly from the fact that Conger at first thought Booth had shot himself. Corbett always claimed the honor of killing the assassin but changed his first statement that "Providence" had directed him, to a plea that he shot to prevent Booth, who "was taking aim," from killing one of the party. Corbett who was watching Booth through a large crack in the barn testified at the Conspiracy Trial (25) "My mind was upon him attentively to see that he did no harm; and when I became impressed that it was time, I shot him. I took steady aim on my arm, and shot him through a large crack in the barn." This would indicate the use of a pistol, as a carbine would be too long to handle conveniently in such a fashion.

The late B.B. Johnson, of Waltham, Massachusetts, who claims that he was in Washington at the time and personally knew Corbett, wrote a book, "Lincoln, Corbett, Booth, Davis," published in 1914, (26) in which is given the most complete biographical sketch of Corbett I have been able to find. I have compared this with a number of the newspaper accounts of Boston Corbett's life which appeared immediately after the death of Booth and found them in agreement with the exception of a few minor details.

Mr. Johnson says with reference to the possible court martial of Corbett for shooting Booth that "after a conference with Assistant Secretary Dana, Mr. Stanton complimented Lieutenant Doherty, approved of his holding Corbett for the action of his superiors and said, "the rebel is dead--the patriot lives-- he has saved us continued excitement, delay and expense--the patriot is released." (27)

Boston Corbett was what would be termed today a "nut". He was born in London, England, in 1832 and named "Thomas P." When baptised in Boston he declared

that Christ, when he called his disciples, gave them new names, and that his name should henceforth be "Boston Corbett". He moved from Boston to New York, learned the hatter's trade, married, lost his wife, and infant child at birth and soon afterward moved back to Boston. He was always very eccentric; wore his hair quite long "because all the pictures of Christ represented him wearing long locks." This he could not do, however, in the army. He was in the habit of spending his money for religious tracts which he publicly distributed.

He entered the army early in the war, enlisting as a private in Company 1, 12th New York Militia on April 19, 1861. After re-enlisting and being mustered out twice, as a sergeant in Company L, 16th New York Cavalry, he remained with that company until August 17th after the assassination.

It is said that he once remonstrated with his Colonel for swearing at the men. For this he was sent to the guard house from which he emerged saying that he had had a "good time with his God and his Bible." After the war he returned to Boston, then went to Danbury, Connecticut, as a hatter and "preached in the country round about." We next know of him as an active "Methodist lay preacher" in Camden, New Jersey.

In 1878 he removed to Kansas and took up a homestead at Concordia, Cloud County, built a "dugout" and lived in it several years, spending his time as a preacher and was "in great demand at revival meetings." Oldroyd in his "Assassination of Abraham Lincoln" and a writer to the Boston Herald, September 1913, claimed that he "became a patent medicine peddler in the southwest with residence at Enid, Oklahoma. If this were true it would have been a rather startling coincidence, for it was in Enid, Oklahoma, on January 13, 1903, that there committed suicide ~~one~~ David George, whose embalmed body has been shown throughout the southwest for several years past as John Wilkes Booth.

A letter dated September 29, 1913, from the Secretary of State at Topka, Kansas, to B.B. Johnson, the author of "Lincoln, Corbett, Booth, Davis, (28) gives the following information:

" I am in receipt of your letter of September 26, asking for information concerning Boston Corbett, the slayer of John Wilkes Booth. In reply I beg to advise, that a sketch of the life of Boston Corbett in the Historical Society of this State prepared by Judge Huron, present police judge of this city, shows that Mr. Corbett was born in England in 1832.

" He was chosen assistant doorkeeper of the House of Representatives of the Kansas Legislature for the session of 1887. On February 15, of that year, laboring under the impression that he was being discriminated against by other officers of the House, Mr. Corbett drew a revolver and running the officers from the building created such a commotion that it became necessary to adjourn the Legislature. He was finally seized by the police officers, overpowered and was taken before the probate judge, where he was adjudged insane on the following day. He escaped from the Topeka Asylum for the Insane, May 26, 1888. About a week later he showed up in Neodesha, Kansas, which is in the southeastern part of the state. He was riding the same horse on which he made his escape from the asylum. This horse had been ridden up to the asylum grounds by a boy and left tied to a post, while the boy was visiting about the grounds. In company with a number of other inmates Mr. Corbett passed near the horse, and seeing him, sprang from the ranks, mounted the horse and rode away. In Neodesha he met a man who served with him as a prisoner in Andersonville prison. He told his old comrade that he had been so shamefully treated that he was going to leave the country and go to Mexico.

"Judge Huron, who was appointed a guardian for him by the probate court, advises me that this is the last information he has ever had of Mr. Corbett. A few years after bidding farewell to the old comrade in Neodesha, a man claiming to be Boston Corbett made application for a pension under that name. This man was a patent medicine peddler.

"Judge Huron investigated the matter and learned that while Corbett was five feet and four inches tall this medicine vender was six feet tall. At that

time Corbett was a man past seventy years of age, and the man applying for the pension was under fifty years of age. Judge Huron succeeded in sending the man to the penitentiary at Atlanta, Georgia, for three years. I think it safe to say that no one in Kansas knows the whereabouts of Boston Corbett.

"Judge Huron has done everything in his power to locate his ward, but as stated above, has learned nothing from him since he bade farewell to his old comrade in Neodesha."

"A later letter from the Secretary of the Historical Society adds the fact that the "old comrade" was Richard Thatcher, who in 1888 was Superintendent of Schools at Neodesha."

Mr. Johnson states that in September, 1905, he saw in the New York Sun a notice that a man claiming to be Boston Corbett had been arrested at Dallas, Texas, and immediately communicated with the United States attorney at that place, from whom he received the following letter, dated November 16, 1905:

"The man whom I prosecuted was not the genuine Boston Corbett, who shot Booth. It was an extremely interesting case. The defendant was uneducated, but very bright, and he from some source, had secured much data, which enabled him to impersonate Boston Corbett to a remarkable degree. He is now in the United States Penitentiary at Atlanta, Georgia."

November 20, 1913, the Department of Justice at Washington wrote Mr. Johnson that "the imposter used the names of James and John Corbett, was committed to prison October 25, 1905, to serve three years for perjury. Was transferred to the government hospital for insane at Washington, D.C., October 26, 1906, and discharged as cured December 24, 1908. That he gave his age as fifty years." (29)

THE CAPTURE

Notes.

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- (1) Chapter 8.
- (2) The story is told from the official reports of Lieutenant Doherty, dated three days after the capture of Booth and Herold. (Official Records, Series 1, Vol. 46, Part 1, p.1317) and the signed statement of Colonel Conger and Lieutenant L.B. Baker sent to Secretary of War Stanton, and the testimony of these officers at the Conspiracy Trial, the Surratt Trial, and the Impeachment Investigation. There is no material difference between the stories of the three officers. Each tries to show that he was in command in order to receive the lion's share of the reward, but they all agree on what transpired.
- (3) "History of the Secret Service," by Baker, p.496; also "The Capture, Death and Burial of J. Wilkes Booth," by Ray Stannard Baker, McClure's, May 1897.
- (4) Lieutenant Baker, S.T. p.316-317.
- (5) Doherty's Report, O.R. Series 1, Vol. 46, Part 1, p.1319 and Testimony of Lieutenant Baker, S.T. p.316-317. The mustache, as we have learned, Booth shaved off at Dr. Mudd's.
- (6) O.R. Series 1, Vol. 46, Part 1, p. 1317-22.
- (7) C.T. p.95-96,
- (8) C.T. p.91.
- (9) S.T. pp. 305-315.
- (10) Imp. Inv. p.324-333.
- (11) Imp. Inv. p.479-492. S.T. pp

(12) C.T. p.94.

12 1/2 S.T. pp 302-305

(13) W.H. Garrett in Philadelphia Press interview, published April 12, 1896, according to Colonel Conger's C.T. Testimony, Jack Garrett came out and said, "This man says, 'Damn you, you have betrayed me.'"

(14) Philadelphia Press, April 12, 1896.

Lieutenant Doherty in his story (MSS 1885) says that when Booth was told that the barn was surrounded by fifty men, after a pause said, "Oh, Captain, I am a cripple and alone; won't you give me a chance for my life?"

Colonel Conger's Conspiracy Trial testimony at this point is interesting:

"I then directed Lieutenant Baker to tell them that if they would come out and deliver themselves up, very well; if not, in five minutes we would set the barn on fire.

"Booth replied: 'Who are you; what do you want; whom do you want?'

"Lieutenant Baker said, 'We want you, and we know who you are; give up your arms and come out.'

"I say Booth; for I presumed it was he. He replied, 'Let us have a little time to consider it.'

"Lieutenant Baker said, 'Very well'; and some ten or fifteen minutes probably intervened between that time and anything further being said.

"He asked again, 'Who are you, and what do you want?'

"I said to Lieutenant Baker, 'Do not by any remark made to him allow him to know who we are; you need not tell him who we are. If he thinks we are rebels, or thinks we are his friends, we will take advantage of it; we will not lie to him about it, but we need not answer

any questions that have any reference to that subject, but simply insist on his coming out, if he will.' The reply was made to him, 'It doesn't make any difference who we are; we know who you are, and we want you; we want to take you prisoners.'

"Said he, 'This is a hard case; it may be I am to be taken by friends.'

"Some time in the conversation he said, 'Captain, I know you to be a brave man, and I believe you to be honorable; I am a cripple. I have got but one leg; if you will withdraw your men in line one hundred yards from the door, I will come out and fight you.' Lieutenant Baker replied that we did not come there to fight; we simply came there to make him a prisoner; we did not want any fight with him.

"Once more after this he said, 'If you'll take your men fifty yards from the door, I'll come out and fight you; give me a chance for my life.' The same reply was made to him.

"His answer to that was, in a singular theatrical singularly voice, 'Well, my brave boys, prepare a stretcher for me.'

Note that Booth is quoted as saying: "I am a cripple. I have got but one leg." Colonel Conger states in his testimony that Lieutenant Baker was at the barn door and did most of the questioning.

(14) continued --

(14) John (Jack) Garrett was asked by the district attorney at the Surratt Trial (S.T. p.303-304) to describe what occurred when the officers came to the house.

A. "The first intimation I had of them was hearing them at the house. I went directly to the house. Three of them were standing around my father. As soon as I walked up, one of the officers, Colonel Conger, I think they represented him to be, turned to me and asked where I came from. I told him who I was, and asked him who he was in pursuit of. I told him there were two men at the house, and that they were now in the barn; that if he would go out with me I would show him where it was. The three officers left my father directly and went with me to the barn. When we reached the barn one of them, I think Colonel Conger, said to me, "There are three rooms here, the tobacco house and two corn-houses; if you do not tell me the exact house he is in, your life will pay the forfeit." I told him that, to the best of my knowledge, he was in the tobacco-house; that he went there the night before, and I supposed he was there at that time. Then, after stationing his guard round the house, I think Baker came to me and says, "I want you to go into that barn and demand the surrender of the arms that man has and bring them out to me. Unless you do it, I will burn your property." I went to the door and Baker unlocked it. I went into the barn; went up where Booth was lying. I think he was lying when I went in. As soon as I got up to where he was, he raised up. I told him what I was sent in there for. He asked me who the men were. I told him I did not know; I only knew they were armed soldiers. He said, "If you don't get out of here I will shoot you; you have betrayed me. Get out of the barn at once." He raised to get his pistol and I went out at once.

Q. "Where was the carbine?"

A. "I do not know; I suppose it was in the barn. It was very dark in there; I could not see anything."

Q. "At what time was that?"

A. "I suppose two hours to day; I do not know; it was a very dark night. I went out and told one of the officers, Baker, I believe, what he had said, and that if he thought proper to burn the barn he could do so, but I would not risk my life further; that I saw no necessity for burning the barn, if he would wait until daylight he could get him without destroying the property. I was then ordered by him to place some brush against the barn to fire it. Previous to this I had told him what the man inside said: "Young man, I advise you for your own good; if you do not leave at once I will shoot you." I think then there was a conversation between one of the officers outside and Booth inside; the exact words I do not remember. The officer outside demanded of him to come out. He said, "Who are you? Who am I to surrender to? Probably I might be taken by my friends." The officer whoever he was—I think he was Baker—said, "We did not come here to hold any parley with you; we came to capture you; and unless you are out of the barn in five minutes, we will fire it."

Q. "Did he come out?"

A. "Not until after the barn was fired."

Q. "The barn was then fired. What then happened?"

A. "When the barn was fired the door was unlocked. Baker and myself were the first to enter the barn. He went directly to Booth who was then falling or had fallen. I ran to extinguish the flames."

Q. "Where was he, or had he been standing, before he fell?"

A. "I do not know; he was about in the center of the barn then."

Q. "Did you see him standing after the barn had been fired?"

A. "I did not; I did not look."

Q. "Did you see who fired the shot that caused him to fall?"

A. "I did not; he had fallen or was falling when I entered the barn. I was the second to enter."

(15) Colonel Conger's testimony on the argument between Booth and Herold is as

follows:

Booth said, 'There's a man in here wants to come out.' Lieutenant Baker said, 'Very well; let him hand his arms out, and come out.' Some considerable talk passed in the barn; some of it was heard, some not. One of the expressions made use of by Booth to Herold, who was in the barn, was, 'You damned coward, will you leave me now? Go, go; I would not have you stay with me.'

(16) C.T. p.91.

(17) Colonel Conger at the Surratt Trial, S.T. p.309, identified the pin, which had a stone set in jet and gold and on which was the inscription "Dan Bryant to J.W. Booth."

(18) Testimony, Baker, Imp. Inv. p.480-83.

(18½) "We placed Booth in the stern with an oar to steer. Thomas A. Jones had said when describing the events of Friday evening, April 21st: "Herold took the bow-seat to row. Then lighting a candle which I had brought for the purpose--I had no lantern--and carefully shading it with an oilcloth coat belonging to one of the men, I pointed out on the compass Booth had with him the course to steer." (J. Wilkes Booth" by Thomas A. Jones, p.109.)

(19) S.T. p.329

(20) Conger, S.T. p.313. At the Conspiracy and Surratt trials and the Impeachment Investigation the pin, a knife, pair of pistols, belt, hostler, file, pocket compass, spur, pipe, carbine, cartridges, and bills of exchange were shown to Conger and identified by him. The bill of exchange was on the Ontario Bank, Montreal branch, for £61, 12s, 10d, made payable to John Wilkes Booth.

(21) Augusta, Georgia, Chronicle, April 19, 1897.

(22) Testimony of L.B. Baker, May 22, 1867. Imp. Inv. p.487.

Conger in his testimony stated, "I then took what things were in his pockets and tied them up in a piece of paper. He was not then quite dead. He would--once, perhaps, in five minutes--gasp; his heart would almost die out, and then it would commence again, and by a few rapid beats would make a slight motion. I left the body and the prisoner, Herold, in charge of Lieutenant Baker. I told him to wait an hour if Booth was not dead; if he recovered, to wait there and send over to Belle Plain for a surgeon from one of the gun ships; and, if

he died in the space of an hour, to get the best conveyance he could and bring him on." (C.T. p.91.)

- (23) Imp. Inv. p.487.
- (24) C.T. pp.94-95
- (25) Poore, Vol. 1, p.325.
- (26) "Lincoln, Corbett, Booth, Davis" by B.B. Johnson, p.44-45.
- (27) Johnson, p.37.
- (28) Johnson, p.37.
- (29) "Lincoln, Corbett, Booth, Davis" by B.B. Johnson, Waltham, Mass. 1914.
p.51-55.