

WILKES-BOOTH HOAX A FAILURE

Spurning Offer of 'Riches'
Spoiled Promising Coup,
Historian Reveals.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23.—Capt. O. M. Oldroyd, of Mt. Vernon, O., has just revealed that he was approached a few years ago by persons who promised to make him a rich man if he would lend his assistance in a hoax to palm off on the American public the body of an unidentified man as the embalmed body of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln.

Capt. Oldroyd recently turned over to the Government for \$50,000 his collection of Lincoln relics. With the curios out of his possession, he decided he could reveal the proposed hoax and thus clear away all doubt surrounding the disposal of the body of Lincoln's assassin.

In the last half century the public has been interested at intervals by mystery stories connected with the disappearance of Booth after the assassination. These reports had Booth turning up here, there and yonder in the flesh and a great many persons still seem of the opinion that he was not shot and killed by Sergt. Boston Corbett, as the historical version has it, but that somehow he escaped. Others have attached much mystery to the burial place of Booth and have insisted that no one knows where his body lies.

A few years ago, Oldroyd relates, a queer character claiming he was Booth died at Enid, Okla. Some enterprising citizens of that town seized the opportunity, as they thought, to make a fortune. Their plan was to have the body embalmed and placed erect in a wooden case and to exhibit it as the body of the assassin.

"They sent a man to me," said Oldroyd, "to sound me out as to whether I would agree to indorse their fake under a plan to divide the profits. If I had agreed the body would have been sent to Washington and placed on exhibition as the real John Wilkes Booth. I told the emissary in short order that I would not be a party to such a fraud and that they had better not bring the body here. The plan was to charge 25 cents a head as an admission fee and it promised to be a financial bonanza.

"There is no foundation for the mystery stories concerning the burial place of Booth. Twenty-six soldiers surrounded the barn where Booth was shot. They knew there was a reward of \$50,000 for the body, and of course they guarded the body with most scrupulous care. It was brought to Washington, where it lay on a boat at the Navy yard for two days, while all sorts of precautions were taken to make the identification complete. During those two days many hundreds of persons who had known Booth intimately, went to the boat and identified the body as that of Booth.

"After the identification was established beyond peradventure, the body was buried in the yard surrounding the old penitentiary, near the present site of the War College.