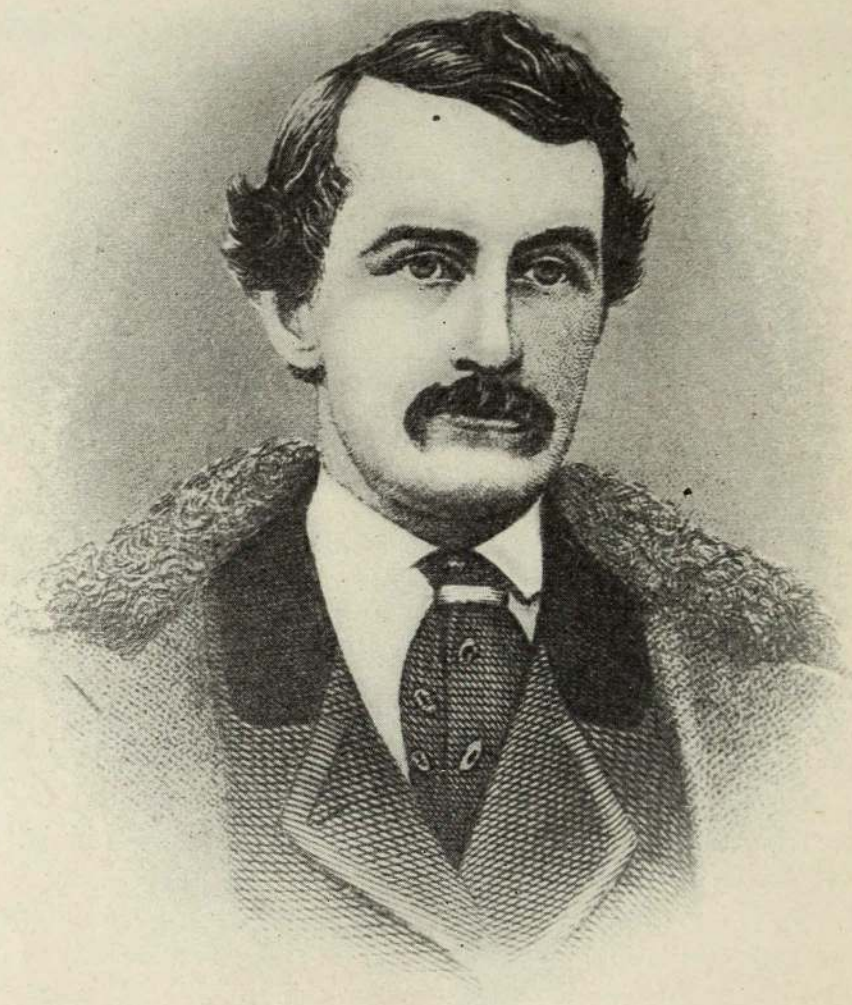




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JOHN WILKES BOOTH

[While attending a performance in Ford's Theater, Washington, on the evening of Friday, April 14, 1865, President Lincoln was fatally shot by John Wilkes Booth, dying the following morning. Booth escaped into Virginia, but was pursued by troops, and was shot in a barn in which he had taken refuge, by Sergeant Boston Corbett. Booth's body was removed to Washington, and Dr. George L. Porter, then a surgeon of the United States Army, was one of those entrusted by the military authorities with the task of concealing the body in a room of the old penitentiary, where the War College now stands. Dr. Porter, who is still living, reveals the facts of the disposal of Booth's body in the following article written for the COLUMBIAN MAGAZINE, and removes the veil of mystery from one of the greatest tragedies of history. The murder of President Lincoln was part of a plot to assassinate the heads of the government and of the army, including the President, Vice-President Johnson, Secretary of State Seward and General U. S. Grant. The conspirators were Booth, Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, whose home was headquarters for the plotters; George A. Atzerodt, who was to have killed Vice-President Johnson; Powell, known as Payne, a former Confederate soldier, who attacked and wounded Secretary Seward; Michael O'Laughlin, who was to have killed General Grant; David E. Herold, who helped Booth in the assassination; Edward Spangler, who assisted the assassin to escape, and Samuel Arnold, an associate of Booth. Mrs. Surratt, Powell, Herold and Atzerodt were hanged. The others were sentenced to imprisonment on Dry Tortugas.]

HOW BOOTH'S BODY WAS HIDDEN

THE TRUE STORY TOLD FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN THE COLUMBIAN

THE ARMY OFFICER WHO HID THE BODY RELATES THE GREWSOME DETAILS

By Dr. George L. Porter

Assistant Surgeon, U. S. A., Retired.



THE recent death of Gen. Thomas T. Eckert brings vividly to the minds of old soldiers the assassination of Abraham Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth; the military commission headed by the then Major Eckert, which had for its purpose the identification of the remains of the assassin on board of the monitor *Montauk*, and the secret burial of the body of Booth early in the morning of April 28, 1865.

At the time of the death of President Lincoln, General Eckert was an assistant secretary of war and the dominant head of the United States Military Telegraph Corps, besides being a man in whom Secretary of War Stanton placed the greatest reliance, and had intrusted to perform many missions of gravest importance to the government.

I have noticed in some of the obituary notices of General Eckert the statement "that he was the only *surviving* man who knew *all* of the facts in one of the greatest secrets of the Civil War, the disposition made of the body of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln."

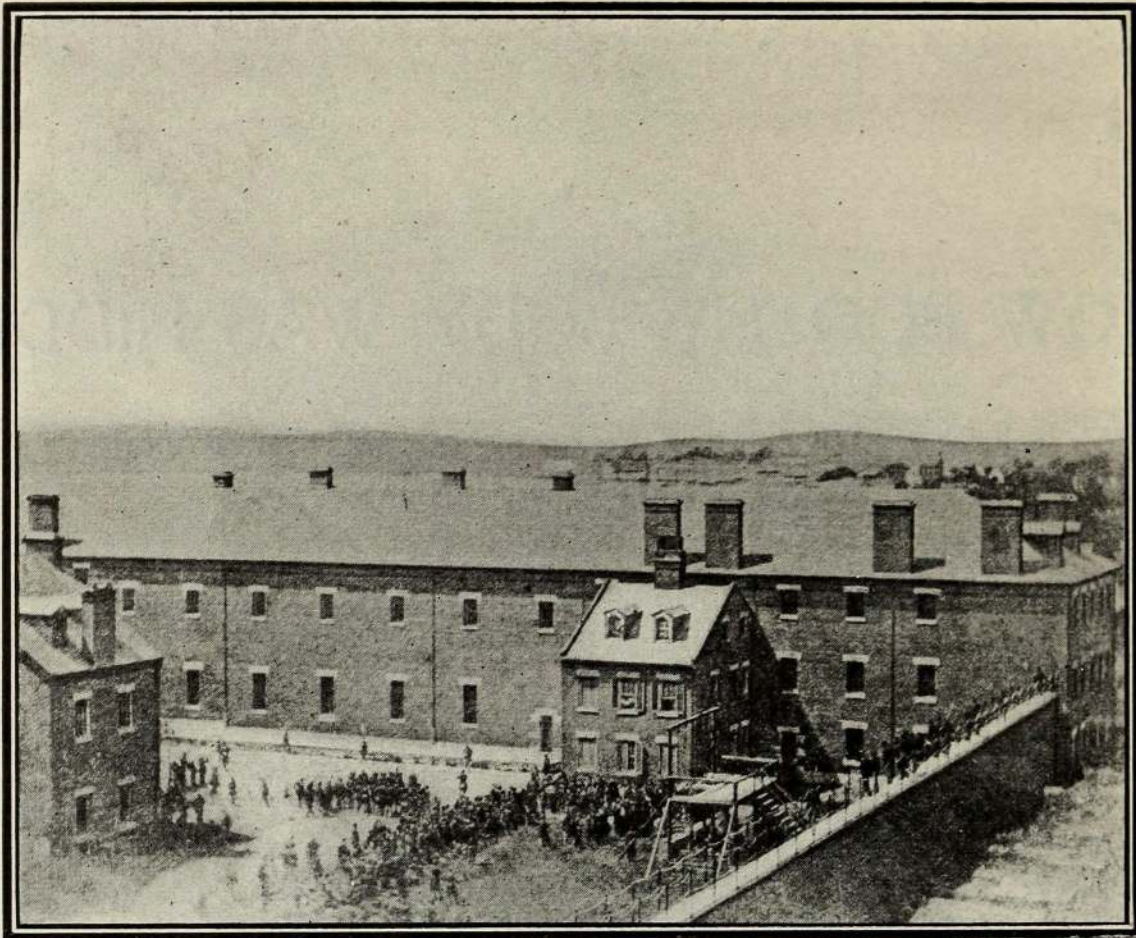
Personally knowing the position occupied by General Eckert at the time of the murder of the President, I can believe that this statement is true. It is

possible that he, and perhaps other trusted officers may have been so concealed in the apartment in which we secreted the remains of Booth, that they could watch every move made by us without being observed themselves, and could personally report to Secretary of War Stanton that his orders had been carried out to the very letter.

But to my knowledge, the only persons present on that gruesome occasion were the four enlisted men, Mr. E. M. Stebbins, military storekeeper of the arsenal, and myself, the only commissioned officer present, then an assistant army surgeon stationed at the arsenal as medical officer.

I pledged my word as an officer and a gentleman that I would reveal nothing which occurred on the night of April 27, 1865, until such time as all necessity for secrecy had passed.

In the years which have passed since that awful April night, the public has been given various accounts in the newspapers, magazines and books as to what was done with the remains of the actor-assassin, which varied in detail with the imagination of the relator. Many of the imaginary stories of Booth's burial mention my presence and, with partiality and resignation, my death. With the single exception of a commun-



View of the Scaffold in the Old Arsenal Prison Yard, as Prepared for the Execution of Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Atzerodt, and Herold, on July 7, 1865.

ication to a Washington, D. C., paper some years ago I have never read a fairly good description of the first hiding of Booth's body. That account was probably inspired by information from the War Department. Even with that information no one could locate the precise locality, for the building and enclosing wall of the old penitentiary were razed to the ground over forty years ago.

The ultimate disposition of the body is a matter of record. When the taking down of the old penitentiary necessitated the removal of Booth's remains, the key of the apartment, which was neither cellar nor cell, could not be found and there is said to have been a lively time at the War Department, for the key had been in the care of Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War. Finally, however, it was found, the place of secretion was unlocked and, in the presence of a number of officers, the body was removed in 1867 to one of the large store houses upon the eastern side of the parade ground of the arsenal.

In February, 1869, President Johnson

gave Edwin Booth permission to remove it to Baltimore, Md., where it now reposes in the Booth lot in Greenmount Cemetery. It was stipulated that the actual location of the remains should not be marked by monument or mound.

The reason for the attempted secrecy may be found in the turbulent condition of public affairs, the general consternation and almost universal suspicion. The departments in Washington were demoralized; the clerks were not trusted to copy official orders that were written by the chief personally and transmitted directly by messenger.

Whether my participation in the secreting of the assassin's body or the fact that I was the medical officer of the arsenal caused the following order to be issued, I have no means of knowing, but from the moment it was placed in my hands until the monitor *Florida* turned north from Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortugas, after delivering four of the conspirators to the commanding officer to begin their sentences, I was in daily attendance upon them and I was one

of three surgeons to pronounce dead the other quartette as its members' bodies dangled from the gibbet-fastened nooses in the yard of the penitentiary at two o'clock on the afternoon of July 7, 1865.

The following is a copy of the order to which I refer:

"SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C.

April 30, 1865.

SIR:—By direction of the Hon. Secretary of War you will report to General Hartranft, U. S. Vols., for the daily inspection of *prisoners* under his charge. Should medical attendance be required in any instance you will give it.

While engaged on this duty you will be careful not to answer any questions addressed to you by the prisoners nor allow them to make any remarks not connected with your professional duties (to you).

The fact of these inspections will not be communicated to any one and your daily official reports will be made direct to General Hartranft, who is in command at the penitentiary, Arsenal Grounds, Washington.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

By order of the Surgeon General,

C. H. CRANE,

Surgeon, U. S. Army."

Asst. Surgeon G. L. PORTER,

U. S. Army,

U. S. Arsenal, Washington, D. C."

The pursuit of Booth and Herold, their stand in the barn of Richard Henry Garrett, three miles from Port Royal, Carolina County; the surrender of Herold and the shooting of Booth by Sergeant Boston Corbett, of the Sixteenth New York Cavalry, and his death at seven o'clock in the morning of April 26th, are known to every American.

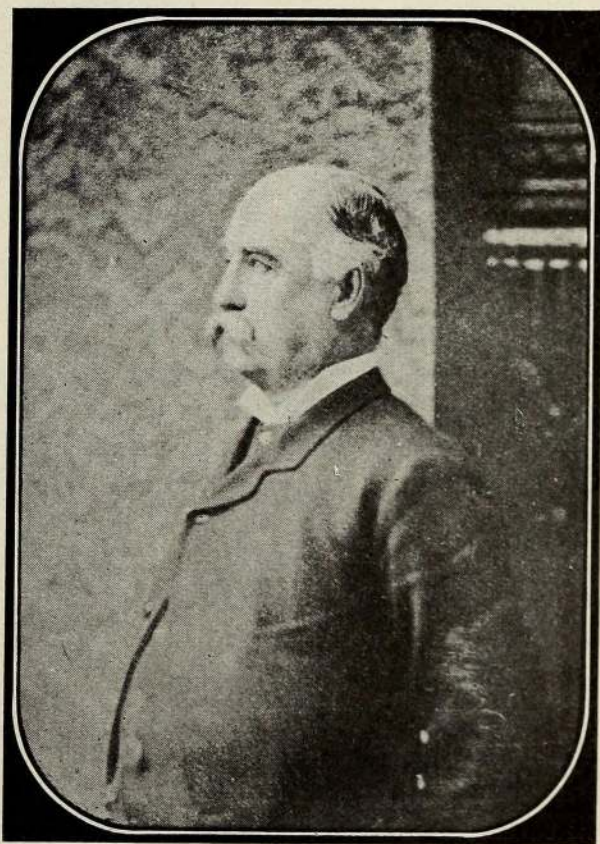
On Thursday afternoon, April 27, 1865, Mrs. Porter and I took a boat ride down the Potomac, returning to the officers' landing at the arsenal grounds, which was marked by a little pier jutting into the water, at the water end of which was a small Summer house. This latter was used by the officers, their families and guests as a waiting place for boats or a spot in which to

sit and enjoy the gorgeous panorama of the river.

As we approached the pier a sentry challenged us, ordered us away, declaring that no persons were permitted to land at the pier and that he would fire upon us if we attempted to land. I was in undress uniform and an officer of the post. The guard proving obdurate, I ordered him to call the officer of the guard who, upon arriving at this new post, ordered the sentry to pass Mrs. Porter and myself.

We had to pass through the little Summer house, which I have mentioned, and as we did I noticed in one corner some bundle securely wrapped in a gunny sack, but had no idea what it was, nor did I ask. The fact of the sentry being stationed at such an unusual post naturally excited wonderment; but in those unsettled times we all knew better than to ask questions.

We knew, of course, by report that the body of Booth had been put aboard the monitor *Montauk*, at 1:45 o'clock that morning; and that his companion, David E. Herold, was a prisoner on board the same war vessel, which was anchored off the Navy Yard in the Ana-



Captain Budd, U. S. S. Florida

costia. Later we heard the particulars, which were in this fashion:

Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Conger reached Washington at five o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, April 26th, the day on which Booth was shot, and told Colonel L. C. Baker, head of the secret service, of the capture of Herold and of the death of Booth at seven a.m., on the porch of Garrett's house, three hours after Corbett's shot. They repaired immediately to the home of Secretary of War Stanton, telling him of the events and tragedy on the Garrett farm. Baker was ordered to take a tug, go to Alexandria and meet the steamer *John S. Ide*, Captain Wilson, which was coming up the river and have him turn over the body of Booth and the prisoner Herold to Colonel Baker. The transfer was made at 10:40 o'clock that night as the Secretary of War directed.

Acting under orders from Secretary of the Navy Welles, the monitor *Montauk* had pulled out in the eastern branch of the Anacostia from the Navy Yard and come to anchor. At midnight all hands were piped to their stations to clear ship for action. A guard was picked, armed with rifles and cutlasses, with orders to fire upon any boat which attempted to come alongside. Just below lay the monitor *Saugus* at anchor, with Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Arnold and Mudd on board as prisoners.

At 1:45 o'clock on the morning of April 27th, the tug which Baker was using came alongside of the *Montauk*; that officer being armed with an order from Secretary Stanton to the commandant of the Washington Navy Yard to

permit Baker to come alongside to transfer one or two prisoners. Booth's body was securely wrapped in a gray army blanket in which Lieutenant Edward P. Doherty had sewn it. Doherty was in command of the cavalry which pursued Booth and Herold. He died in New York City April 3, 1897, while serving as General Inspector of Street Paving. Booth's body was placed on a carpenter's work-bench on the forward deck. None of the guards had any idea whose body was sewn in the blanket, nor were they permitted to ask questions.

Double irons were placed on Herold, a canvas hood, padded with an inch of cotton, and with a slit in it for eating, and breathing, was placed over his head and he was confined in a hammock room under guard. O'Laughlin, Atzerodt and Spangler were also prisoners on the *Montauk*, ironed and guarded as Herold; but they had no idea that the corpse of their leader lay on a bench on the deck above them.

Commodore J. B. Montgomery, com-

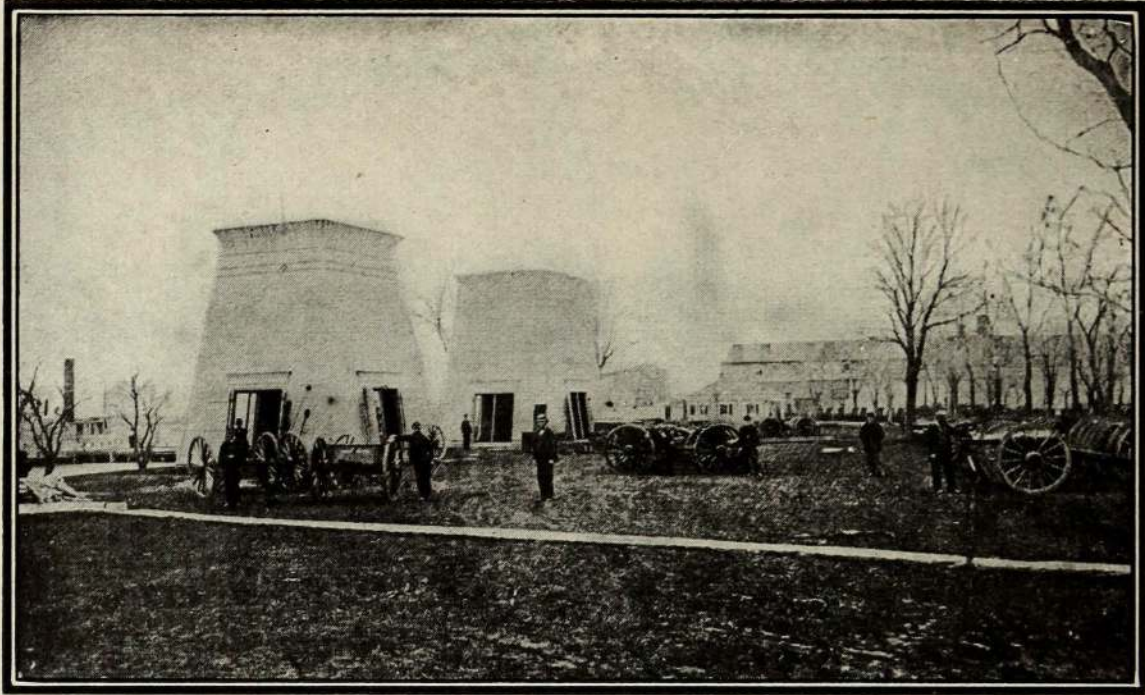
mandant of the Navy Yard, sent this report to the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, later in the morning:

"David E. Herold, prisoner, and the body of Wilkes Booth were delivered here at 1:45 this morning. The body of Booth is changing rapidly. What disposition shall be made of it? It is now on board the ironclad *Montauk*."

So far as is known the Navy Department made no reply to this communication. But the subsequent happenings clearly indicated the policy of secrecy upon which the government had decided, and for reasons readily understood at the



Laura Keene



The Avenue, on the Government Wharf, Down Which Booth's Body was Carried

time, and to-day, when one considers the suspicion and fear on every side produced by the assassination of Lincoln and the plot to kill off the official heads of the recognized lawful authority.

By nine o'clock in the morning of the same day, the Secretaries of War and Navy had issued the following order to Commodore Montgomery:

"You will permit Surgeon-General Barnes and his assistant, accompanied by Judge Advocate-General Holt, John A. Bingham, Major Eckert, William C. Moore, Colonel L. C. Baker, Lieutenant Baker, Lieutenant-Colonel Conger, Charles Dawson, J. L. Smith, Mr. Gardner, photographer, and an assistant, to go on board the *Montauk* and see the the body of John Wilkes Booth. Immediately after the surgeon-general has made an autopsy you will have the body placed in a strong box and delivered to the charge of Colonel Baker, the box being securely sealed."

That the visit of this official body was unexpected and unknown to Commodore Montgomery is shown by the report of the executive officer of the *Montauk* to him and by the commodore transmitted to the Secretary of the Navy. It says:

"About eleven o'clock a.m. Surgeon-General Barnes came on board, and without asking for the captain of the guard

or the commanding officer of the vessel or showing any written authority or informing any officer who he was, or seeming to pay the slightest attention to military etiquette due to one officer from another, walks up to the corpse and commences to cut adrift the wrapping. He was stopped by the inquiry as to his authority for so doing. He replied: 'By order of the Secretaries of War and Navy.' And afterward Major Eckert produced the written order."

Booth's handsome countenance was unmarred by the agony of his lingering death. His moustache and the long lock of hair which had hung down his forehead Booth cut off at the house of Dr. Mudd, where he had stopped in his flight.

Just before the sort of military coroner's jury convened, which was to officially identify the remains, Herold was brought on deck to be photographed. He slowly ascended through the forward hatch and moved forward with the sentries. He was not only handcuffed, but to his leg-irons was attached a chain and thirty-two pound shot, which was carried by a sentry in the rear.

As Herold approached the turret, the gangway narrowed, and here was his one chance to cheat the gallows, for his feet fell on the iron deck but a short distance above the water. A sudden dash to the right and he would have

gone over the side of the unrailed deck of the monitor; the impetus of the rush would have carried the shot, if not the guard, after him. Two minutes later the last breath of Herold would have appeared as bubbles on the surface from where his body lay anchored in the mud three fathoms below. But Herold was a coward, and it is doubtful if such an idea ever occurred to him. His chance was gone in an instant and several weeks later I pronounced him dead as he swung from the scaffold beam with the bodies of Mrs. Surratt, Payne and Atzerodt.

The commission or coroner's inquest was held in the commanding officer's cabin; and while the testimony was being taken which established the identity of the body, Surgeon-General Barnes and his assistant were holding the autopsy on deck. Several persons had recognized the remains as those of Booth and had so testified. Charles Dawson, chief clerk of the National Hotel, positively identified the body by the initials "J. W. B." which had been tattooed in India ink on the right hand between the thumb and forefinger. Dawson

swore that he had frequently observed the letters on Booth's hand while he was signing the hotel register, and on one occasion had said: "Booth, what a fool you were to disfigure that pretty white hand in such a way."

Dr. J. Frederick May was another witness who established the identity of the body beyond cavil or question. Booth had been a patient of his a couple of years before, having a small tumor removed from the left side of his neck, three inches below the ear. Booth had been afraid that it would leave a scar, but had been advised by Dr. May that he should be careful in his movements, so that the wound would heal by "first intention." Some days after the operation Booth called on his surgeon saying that he had met with an unforeseen accident. While playing with Charlotte Cushman, in Baltimore, some stage business called for her to grasp him by the shoulder. In her excitement Miss Cushman seized Booth by the neck, tearing open the wound. This finally healed "by granulation," leaving a mark similar to a vaccination scar. Dr. May gave



Lieut. Col. S. W. Frehrich, Lieut. Geissinger, Surgeon G. T. Porter
(Seated) Capt. A. R. Watts, Lieut. Col. W. H. McCall, Gen. Jno. F. Hartranft, Col. L. A. Dodd
and Capt. C. Roth

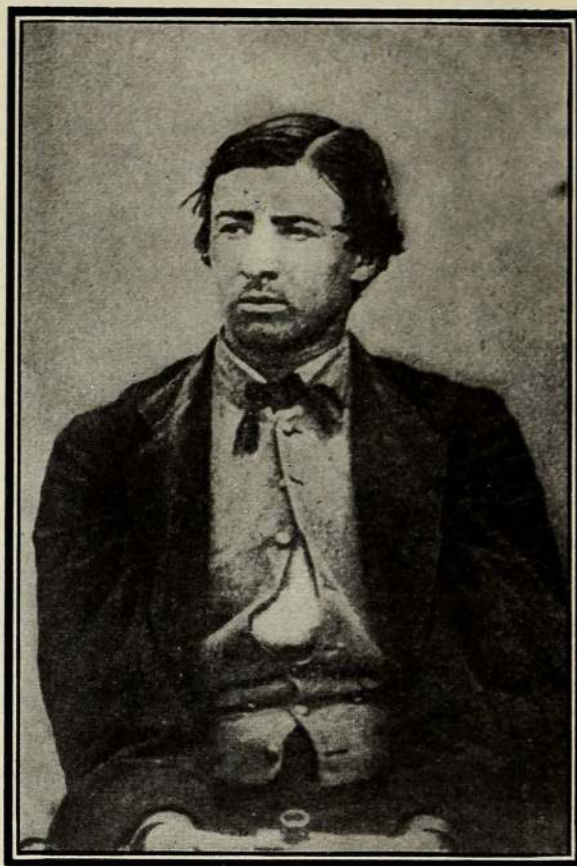
his testimony without knowing Booth's body was on deck or seeing it. The commission immediately went on deck, examined the body and found the scar as described by the surgeon. This ended identification testimony.

Surgeon-General Barnes cut from Booth's neck a section of the vertebra through which the ball from Boston Corbett's revolver had passed. It has been stated also that the assassin's brain and heart were removed, and were placed in the museum of the Medical Department of the Army, which strangely enough was the former Ford's Theatre, where the assassination took place; but of this I have no knowledge.

There has been much controversy as to what happened to Booth's body immediately after the autopsy was held on board the monitor *Montauk*. The following from the records of the Navy Department would seem to settle this for all time. This is the report of Commodore Montgomery, commandant of the Navy Yard to the Secretary of the Navy:

"By telegram yesterday p.m. I reported to the department the removal of the body of the assassin Booth from the *Montauk* to the United States Arsenal in this district (as supposed).

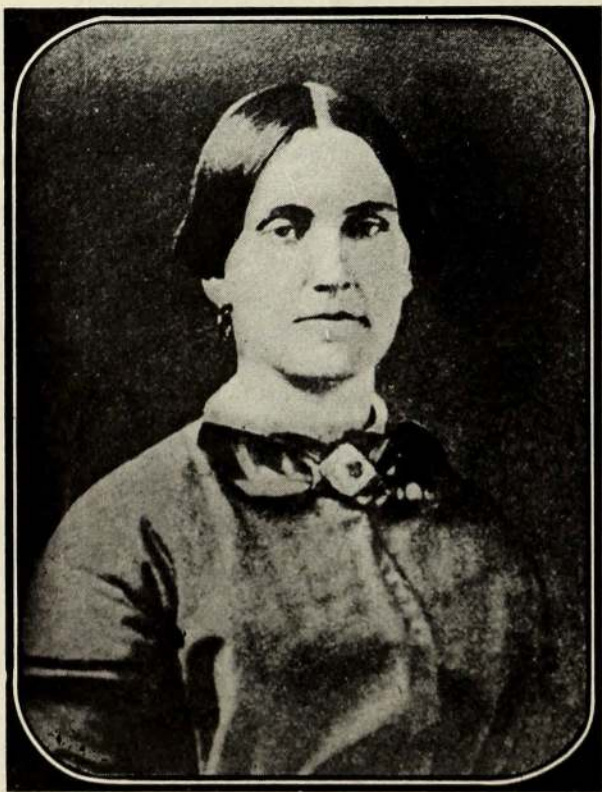
"I have to report that the removal



David E. Herold

was made entirely without my knowledge or any reference to me on the part of officers and others commissioned by the War and Navy Departments to visit the ironclad, and the first intimation given me of the removal was from the executive officer. I called at once for explanation from the marine officer, who said the body was so suddenly and unexpectedly removed to the boat which conveyed it away that he had no opportunity of reporting before the work was accomplished. The unusual transaction deprived me of the opportunity of inclosing the body in the box prepared for it, as ordered by the Department. The box is now on board the *Montauk* and ready for delivery when called for."

Acting under these orders Colonel Baker had the body taken from the *Montauk* about three o'clock in the afternoon by two men in a boat, who rowed down the eastern branch and around to the landing on the west side of the arsenal grounds, where it was placed under guard. The landing ended at the Summer house, and the bundle seen in one corner by Mrs. Porter and myself, as we passed through, after being halted by the sentry, was the body of Booth.



Mrs. Mary E. Surratt

Midnight was being called by the sentries from the various posts as the military storekeeper of the arsenal, Mr. Stebbins, four enlisted men, one of them leading a team attached to a cart, another carrying a lantern, and myself, the only commissioned officer present, met at the little Summer house where a sentry was on guard over the thing in the gunny sack. The four enlisted men were members of the Ordnance Corps and picked for their reliability and discretion. They were sworn to secrecy regarding the happenings of the night.

Two of the men picked up the gunny sack and contents, grunting at its unexpected weight, and placed it in the body of the cart. At a word the man leading the horse started it down the avenue. Men marched on each side of the cart, Stebbins brought up the rear, and I walked ahead with the man carrying the lantern, the flickering rays of which cast fantastic shadows on the surface of the broad avenue. Not a word was spoken by a member of our party. The only sounds to disturb the stillness of the night were the crunching of the wheels, the shuffling of our feet and the fall of the horse's hoofs on the gravel road.

As we followed the body of the assas-



George A. Atzerodt

sin in that midnight march, I realized, but in later years to a much greater degree, its awe and solemnity, as it concerned the two chief actors; nothing was lacking to complete the dramatic closing of the "Tragedy of the Nation," and the historic ending of the event, the place, the circumstances, the time, contributed necessary and appropriate factors.

The long and stately avenue, shaded by heavily foliaged trees, was the pride of the military post; upon the east, pyramidal rows of cannon balls, enclosing big guns dismounted and batteries of light artillery—for the arsenal was the depot of the ordnance supply of the armies of the East; on the west, a beautiful lawn extended to the banks of the Potomac, its well-kept surface broken only by the Egyptian towers of the ballistic pendulum, objects of curiosity to every traveler who went down the river from Washington.

Here the martyred President was accustomed to spend many hours witnessing the experiments with recently invented "small arms" and enjoyed a personal freedom from office seekers and official duties that he could nowhere else experience. Cordial in manner, saga-



Lewis Payne

cious in comprehension, wise and humorous, his frequent calls were welcomed by General Ramsay, the commandant, and the younger officers. The place, hallowed by the memory of his presence, now silently witnessed "the passing" of the body of his murderer.

We marched down the avenue to the west side of the penitentiary, occasionally challenged by the sentries as we approached their posts. The series of buildings known as the penitentiary was about 250 feet long. The western end was the administration section, then came the penitentiary proper; in the eastern end was the room occupied by the Military Commission during the trial of the conspirators, quarters of the turnkey and rooms used to store fixed ammunition. The building had not been used as a prison in years, and was prepared in a hurry for the reception of the conspirators and suspects after the assassination of the President.

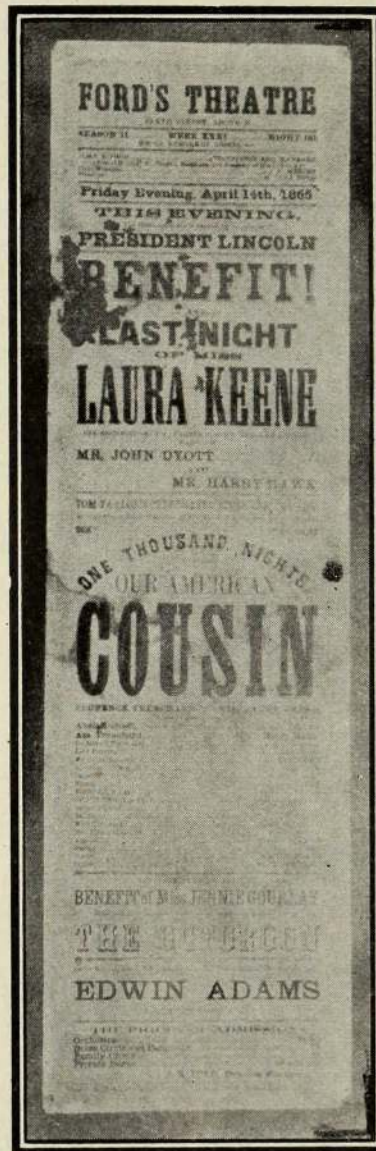
Between the administration and jail ends of the penitentiary was a middle section, which had been used as a storage place for fixed ammunition at the outbreak of the war, and later as a general storage quarter. It was a large room about fifty by forty feet, with supporting columns of stout cedar. There were two enormous doors in it sufficiently large to drive a team and wagon through them, opening on the south and north sides. In this room were a number of cases of goods and fixed ammunition; although the greater portion of the latter had been removed a short time before our adventure owing to the explosion of a shell, and the attendant fear that the entire series of buildings might

be blown into the sky by a like accident.

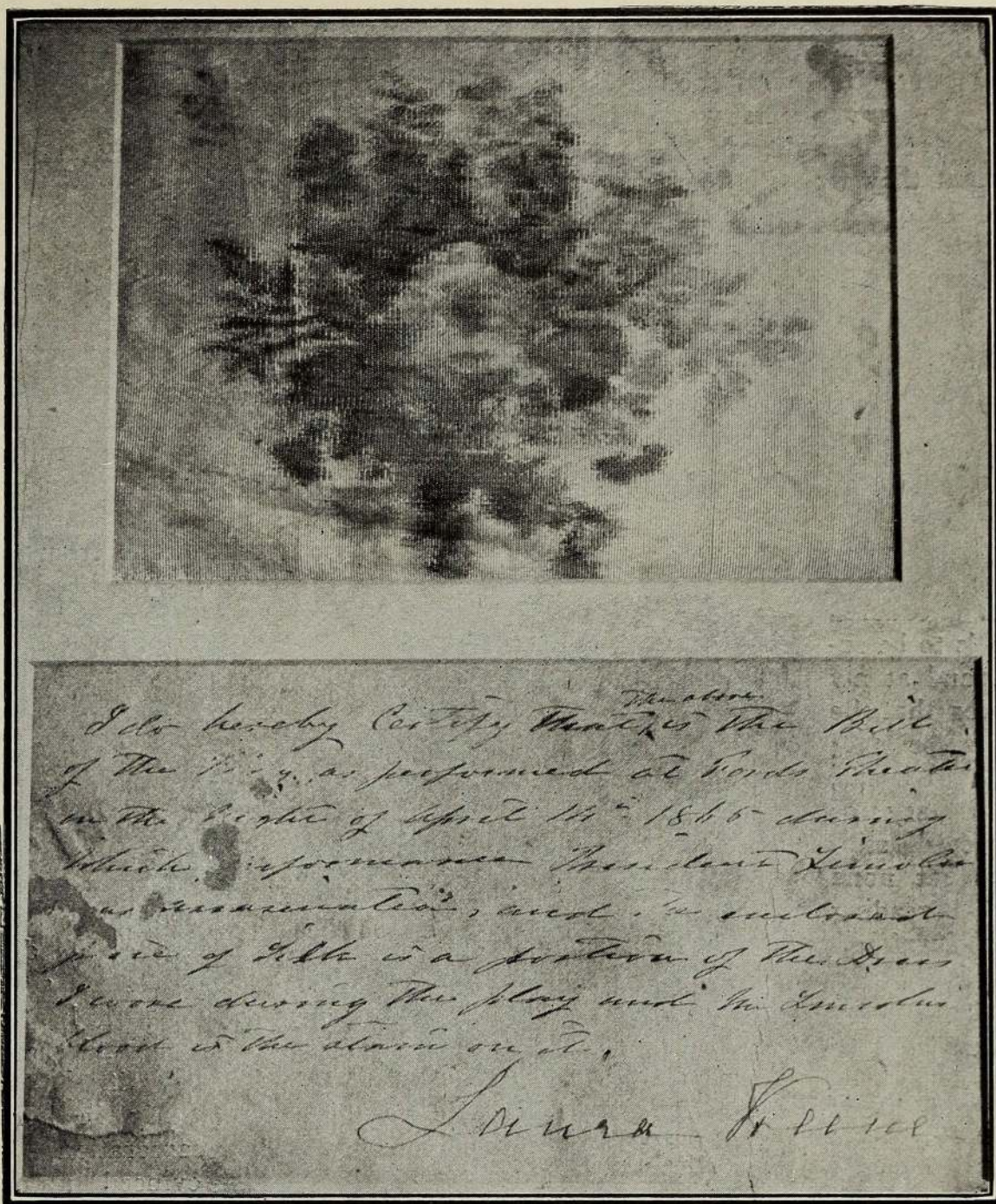
The cart was led up to one of the doors, which E. M. Stebbins, the military storekeeper, unlocked with a key which he produced. Once inside the apartment, the door was carefully locked and the cart was led to the extreme southwest corner of the storeroom. By the flickering light of the lantern we saw a shallow hole lying before us. Whether there was a box in it, I do not know. A pile of dry earth was on one side of the excavation. Grotesque shadows were cast by the light of the lantern falling upon the gun boxes and the packing cases.

Two of the men picked up the body of Booth, still in its wrapping of gunny sacking and enshrouded in an army blanket, and deposited it in the shallow hole, which could not be dignified by the term "grave." This was quickly filled with earth, packed down and the surface smoothed off. The surplus dirt was thrown into the cart and removed. As the floor of the chamber was a dirt one, there was little trouble in concealing the fact that a hole had been dug in it and then filled up.

It is possible that there were some persons secreted from our view in the chamber, who could watch our every movement and report our doings; but I think this is improbable. It is possible, for the dim light of the lantern did not penetrate the darkness far, neither could we see behind the things which were stored there; it is improbable, for after we had secreted the body Mr. Stebbins, who had the key, locked the doors of the apartment and we left, Stebbins and I going to our quarters, and the soldiers returning to their barracks. The only



Laura Keene's Personal Programme



A Piece of Laura Keane's Dress, Showing the Spots of Blood Resulting from the Actress Having Held the Head of Lincoln After He Had Been Shot

means of egress from the apartment in which the body of Booth was secreted was through the doors which Stebbins had locked, and the key of which was later delivered to Secretary Stanton, through the proper military channels.

It has been said that we secreted the body of Booth in the cellar of the penitentiary. There was no cellar in the penitentiary. All of the buildings that were standing forty-five years ago on the night of the so-called burial of Booth have been razed, so far as I know, to give place to the War College and officers' quarters.

Secretary Stanton ordered that all

conspirators should wear hoods for better security against conversation. A portion of the order read: "And they shall have a canvas bag put on head of each, and tied around the neck, with a hole for proper breathing and eating, but not for seeing." This order not only applied to the eight conspirators immediately connected with the plot to assassinate Lincoln, but to about forty other suspects who were arrested and confined in the penitentiary. Among the latter was Burton N. Harrison, private secretary to Jefferson Davis and father of Congressman Francis Burton Harrison, of New York.

This hood was padded with an inch thickness of cotton, and soon had the natural effects upon its wearers, who were deprived of light and air. I was afraid that they would become mentally affected before their trial and so reported to the Secretary of War.

Dr. Gray, head of the Utica (N. Y.) Infirmary, one of the most noted insanity experts of the country, was sent for to examine the prisoners and to consult with me. Dr. Gray unhesitatingly agreed with me, that a continuance of the use of the hoods would be liable to cause insanity. On our joint representation, Secretary Stanton ordered the hoods to be removed, and at my suggestion that the prisoners be furnished with books, the Secretary of War agreed, stipulating that none of the reading matter furnished should have been printed later than 1835. On my representation that the prisoners needed exercise and fresh air, they were taken daily into the prison yard, where they were exercised under a heavy guard.

I was the only person permitted to converse with the conspirators without witnesses. To prevent all possible chance of communication, aside from being ironed as I have described, each of the prisoners virtually occupied three cells; that is, there was a vacant cell on each side of the one occupied by a prisoner. This was the method taken to prevent any attempt at communication by means of knocking or rapping, which is in vogue in so many of our prisons. An armed guard was stationed in front of each cell door, where he could watch every move of the occupant. A company of infantry, of the Invalid Corps, all

veterans, was constantly on guard in the penitentiary room, the members of which could see the guards standing on the different galleries in front of the prisoners' cells. Any attempt at rescue or escape would have met with instant and violent death.

Once freed from the hoods, the conspirators' health improved, particularly when permitted to exercise and read. Years after he was given his freedom, Burton N. Harrison made the statement that if I had not made such a firm stand against such rigorous confinement he would have gone insane from wearing the hood alone, to say nothing of solitary confinement.

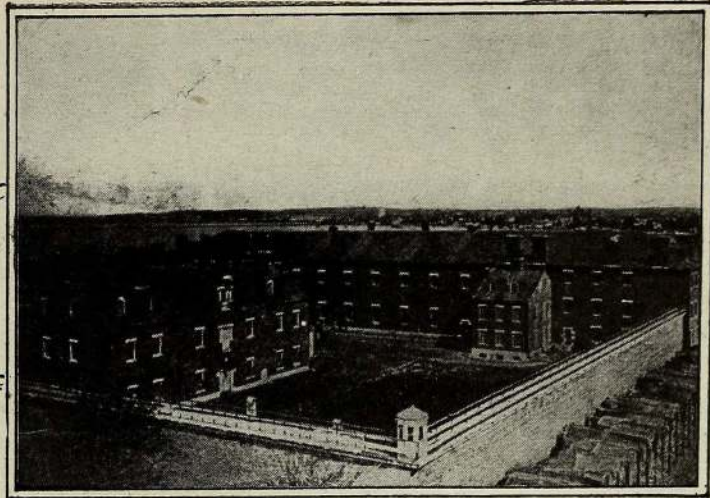
Mrs. Surratt was a striking woman, and a handsome one despite the unavoidable imprint of prison life. She kept herself in hand, despite the seriousness of her position, and gave me but little trouble. Early in her incarceration she evinced a desire to starve herself, with the possible idea of ending her

life in this manner. I had a quiet, earnest talk with her, pointing out that abstinence from food would make her ill; that she was under my medical care and I should be forced to adopt means of insuring that she received the proper amount of nourishing food at regular intervals. There was no more trouble after that, Mrs. Surratt virtually selecting her own menu; the men were furnished the regular army ration.

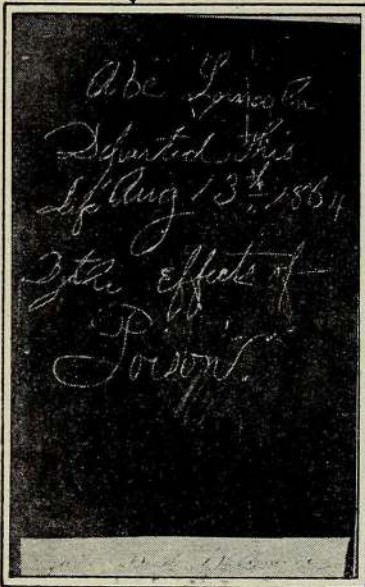
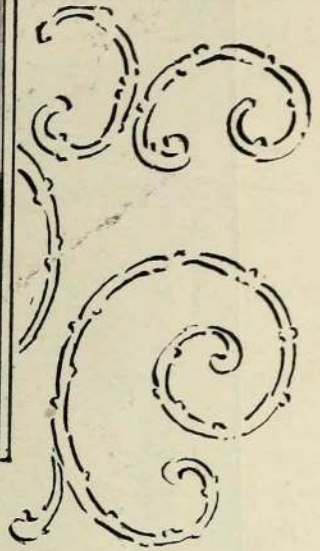
General Hartranft and his staff, Colonel L. A. Dodd, Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. McCall, Lieutenant-Colonel G. W. Frederick, Captain A. R. Watts, Captain C. Rath, Lieutenant G. W. Geissinger and the writer were in charge of the execu-



Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock



Arsenal where the body of Booth was buried



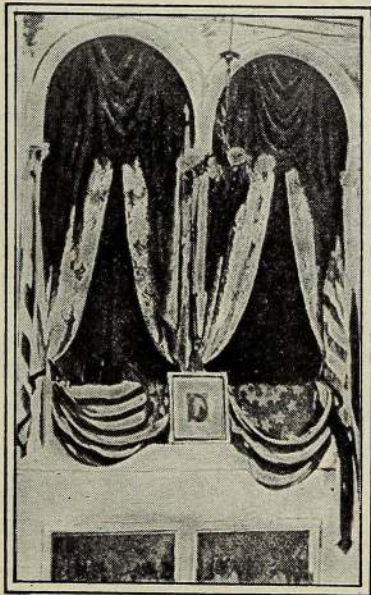
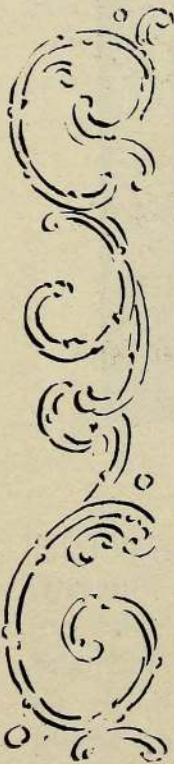
Inscription on window pane of Meadeville Hotel



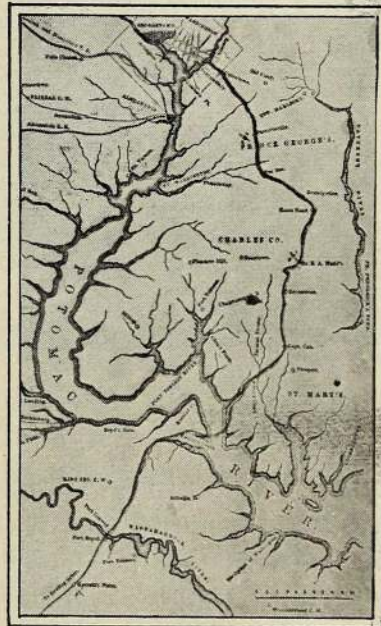
Booth and Herold crossing the Potomac



Last Program of Booth

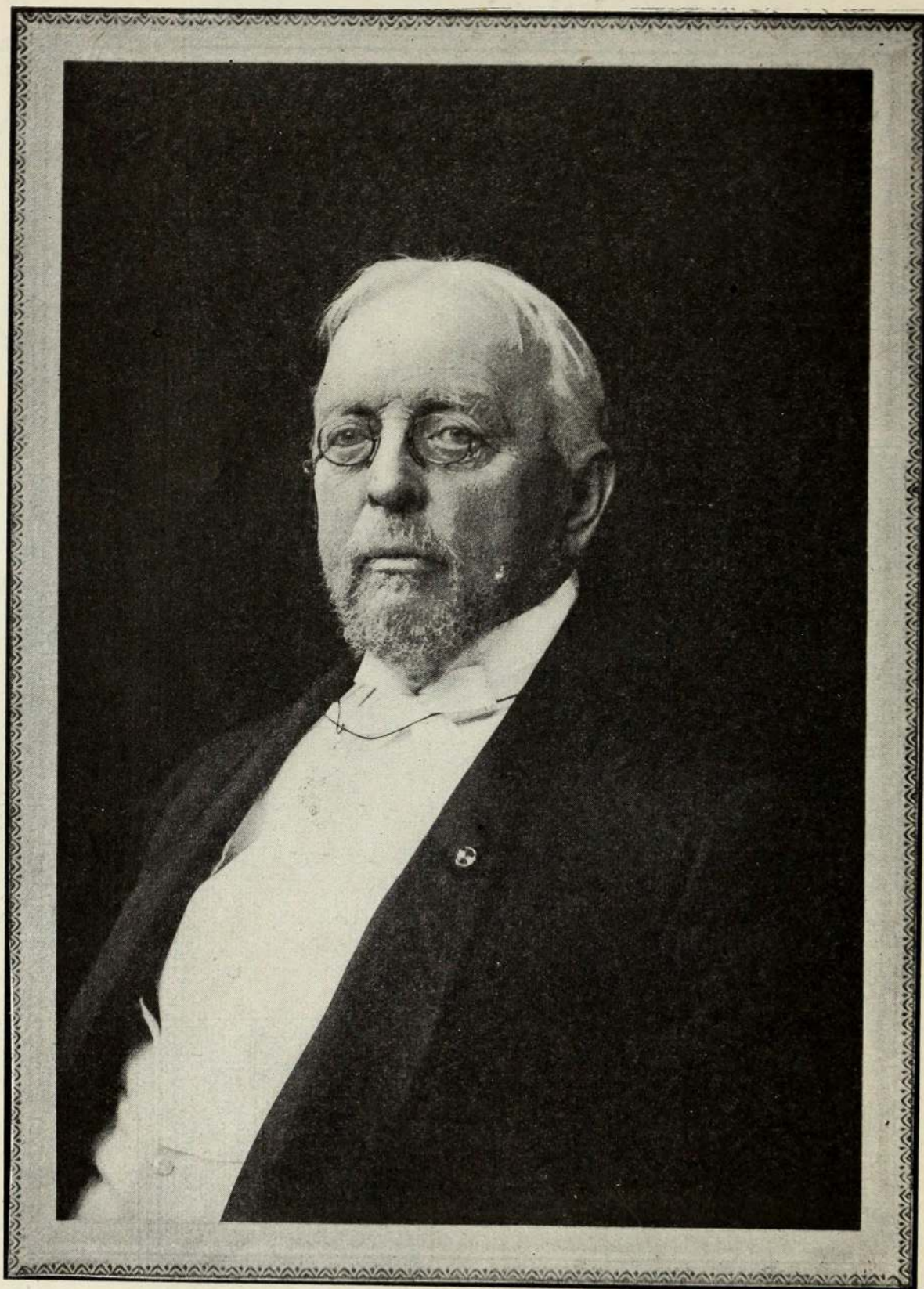


FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.
THE PROSCENIUM BOX ON THE RIGHT OF THE STAGE OF FORD'S THEATER, AS DECORATED FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY, APRIL 14, 1865.



Map of Booth's Route





Dr. George L. Porter

tion of the prisoners. Captain Christian Rath, the executioner, after the war was employed in the railway mail service, running between Grand Rapids and Detroit, Mich., and made his home at Jackson up to the time of his death a few years ago. Telling of his part in preparing for the hanging, Captain Rath said:

"I received orders from General John F. Hartranft to execute Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Herold and Atzerodt. The orders were that the execution should take place at one o'clock, July 7th, or as soon thereafter as circumstances would permit. It did not come off as early as was expected, from the fact that General Hancock, whose presence was necessary,

failed to appear. It was stated that Mrs. Surratt's counsel undertook to stop the execution by having Hancock arrested. I saw the gallows built and secured the rope, which was a three-ply Boston hemp, from the Navy Yard. I made the nooses and placed them on the beam, saw them adjusted on the victims, then stepped aside and gave the signal to the men underneath the gallows to spring the traps. A short time afterward the bodies were taken down and buried."

When the soldiers and the reporters took their places in the outer prison yard they saw the gallows, with four dangling nooses, and the four wooden boxes at the edge of four newly excavated graves, at the rear and at one side of the scaffold, the earth of the graves already dried and brittle in the burning sun.

Shortly before two o'clock a wicket opened, the troops sprang to their feet and stood at order arms, the low order passed from company to company and the flags went up. First came a middle-aged woman dressed in black, bonneted and veiled, walking between two bare-headed priests. One of these held against his breast a crucifix of jet, and both of them muttered the service of the dead. Four soldiers, with muskets at shoulder, followed and a captain led the way to the gallows.

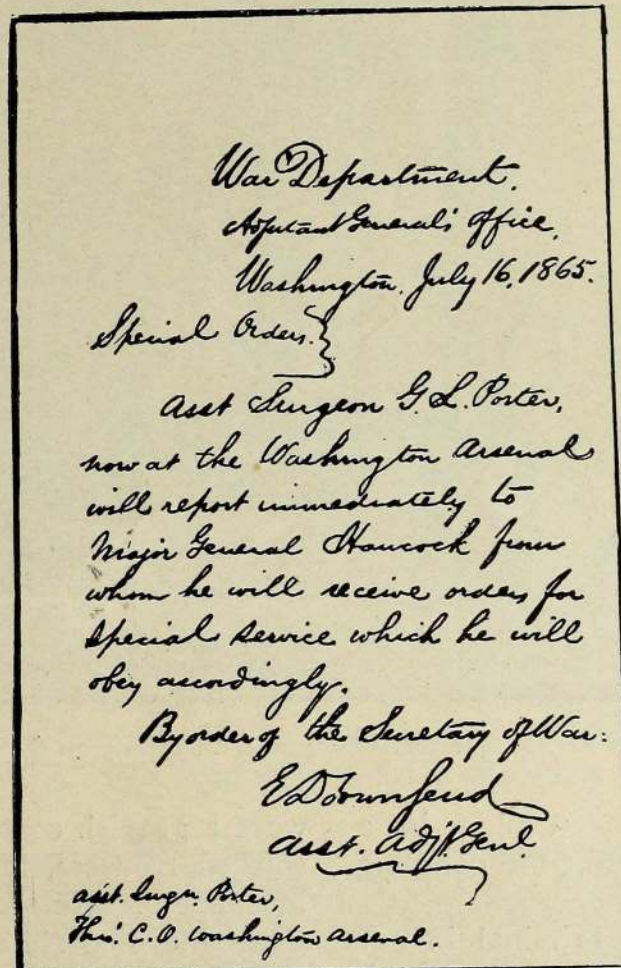
The second party escorted a small and shambling German, whose head had a long white cap upon it, rendering more pronounced his dull complexion, and

upon whose feet the chains clanked as he slowly advanced, preceded by two officers, flanked by a Lutheran clergyman, and followed as his predecessor by an armed squad. The third party and preacher clustered about a shabby boy, Herold, whose limbs tottered as he progressed.

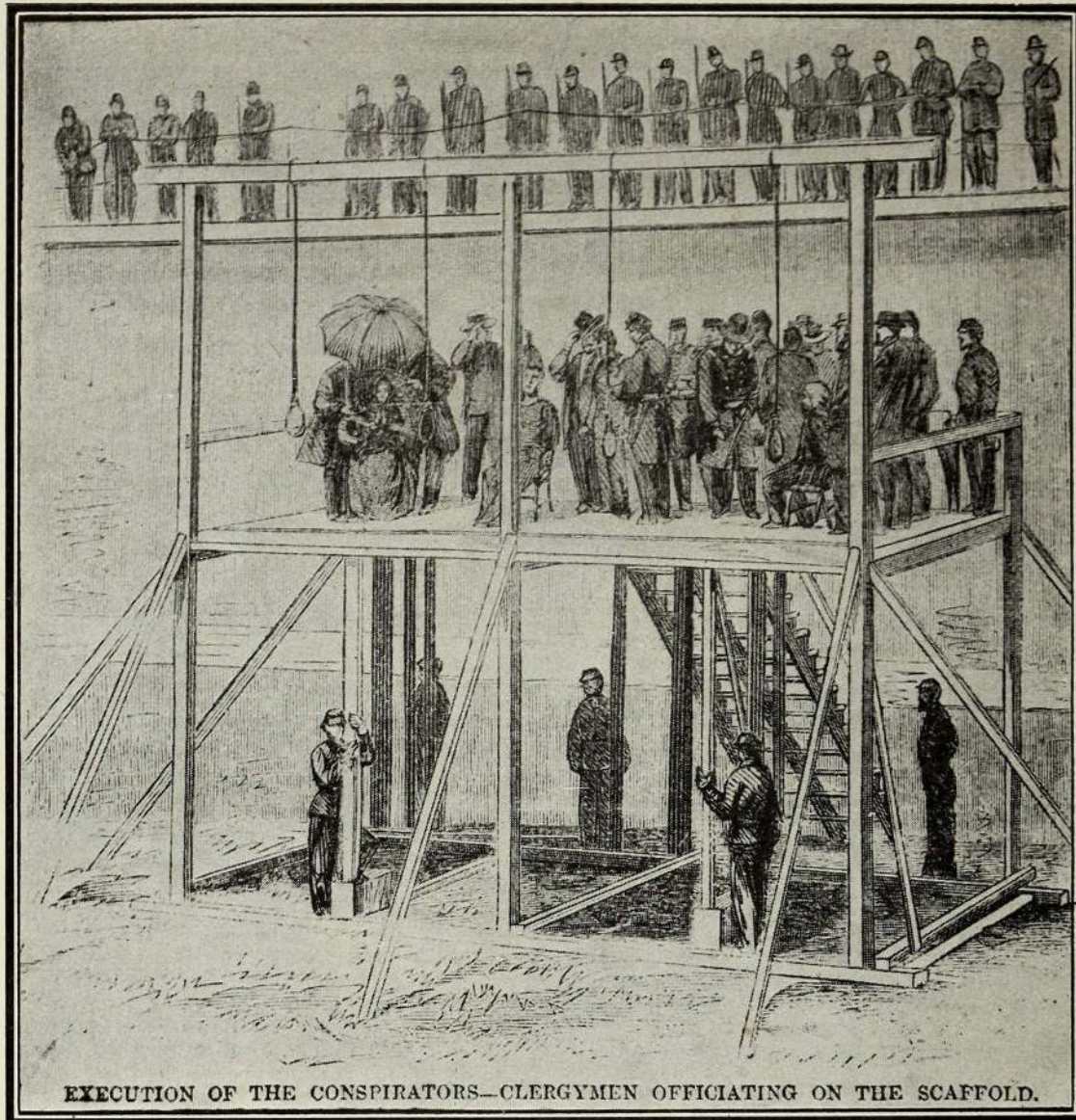
Payne, the former Confederate soldier, whose real name was Powell, and who had been in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, was the fourth to walk in, the shadow of a straight high stature, whose tawny hair and large blue eyes were suggestive of the barbarian striding in his conqueror's triumph rather than the assassin going to the gallows. All of these captives, priests, guards and officers, nearly twenty in all, climbed slowly and solemnly the narrow steps; and upon four arm chairs, stretching across the stage in the rear of the traps, the condemned were seated with their spiritual advisers behind

them during the final preparations.

The findings and warrants were immediately read to the prisoners by General Hartranft in a quiet and respectful tone, an aide holding an umbrella over him. Mrs. Surratt was placed on the right, and nearest to her was Payne, followed by Herold and Atzerodt. Mrs. Surratt was very feeble and leaned her head upon alternate sides of her armchair in nervous spasms. Her general expression was that of acute suffering, vanishing at times as if by the conjuration of



Surgeon Porter's Order to Report to Gen. Hancock



Execution of the Conspirators—Clergymen Officiating on the Scaffold

her pride, and again returning in a paroxysm, as she looked at the dangling rope before her.

Payne, the strongest criminal in our history, was alone dignified and self-possessed. He wore a closely fitting knit shirt, a sailor's hat tied with a ribbon, and dark trousers, but no shoes. His low-cut collar showed the tremendous muscularity of his neck, and the breadth of his breast was more conspicuous by the manner in which the pinioned arms thrust it forward. He was the strong central figure of the tableau. He looked at death as for one long expected; not a tremor or a shock stirred his long stately limbs; and he died without taking the hand of any living friend.

Herold, although whimpering, showed more grit than was anticipated, looking at the noose flaunting before him and at the people gathered below. Atzerodt

wore a grayish coat, black vest and light colored trousers, his feet were encased in slippers. He was the picture of despair and died ridiculously.

Each of those about to die, save Mrs. Surratt, thanked, through their spiritual advisers, all those who had in any manner had to do with them during their confinement and trial. The stage was still filled with people; the crisis of the occasion had come; the chairs were withdrawn, the condemned stood upon their feet, and the process of tying the limbs began.

Mrs. Surratt half fainted and sank back upon her attendants as an officer gathered the ropes tightly around her robes and bound her ankles. Payne stood as straight as one of the scaffold beams, and braced himself so stoutly that this in part prevented the breaking of his neck. Herold stood whimpering at the

lips, and Atzerodt, in his groveling attitude, began to talk while being tied. The two drops fell with a slam, the four bodies dropped like a single thing. After hanging about twenty minutes, Surgeon Otis, U. S. V., Assistant Surgeon Woodward, U. S. A., and I examined them and pronounced them dead.

In about ten minutes more the bodies were cut down, placed in the pine boxes by a squad of soldiers and lowered in the graves prepared for them. It has been said and very generally believed that the conspirators were all, or very nearly all, Catholics. Such is not the case. Of the ten, four were of that faith—Mrs. Surratt, her son, John H. Surratt, Dr. Mudd and Michael O'Laughlin. Payne was a Baptist; Booth and Herold were Episcopalians, as was Mrs. Surratt before her conversion; Atzerodt claimed to be a Lutheran and Arnold was also a Protestant.

Of the surviving conspirators still prisoners in the penitentiary, none of them knew of the tragedy which had been enacted on the afternoon of July 7th. They were deprived of their exercise for a few days.

On the afternoon of July 17th Mudd, Arnold, O'Laughlin and Spangler were brought before General Hartranft in the outer prison yard and told of the finding

of the court in their cases. The first three were to be imprisoned for life at hard labor in the penitentiary at Albany; Spangler was sentenced to six years in the same place of imprisonment. But two days before they were informed of their fate, President Johnson had changed the sentence to confinement at Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortugas; but the conspirators were not told this.

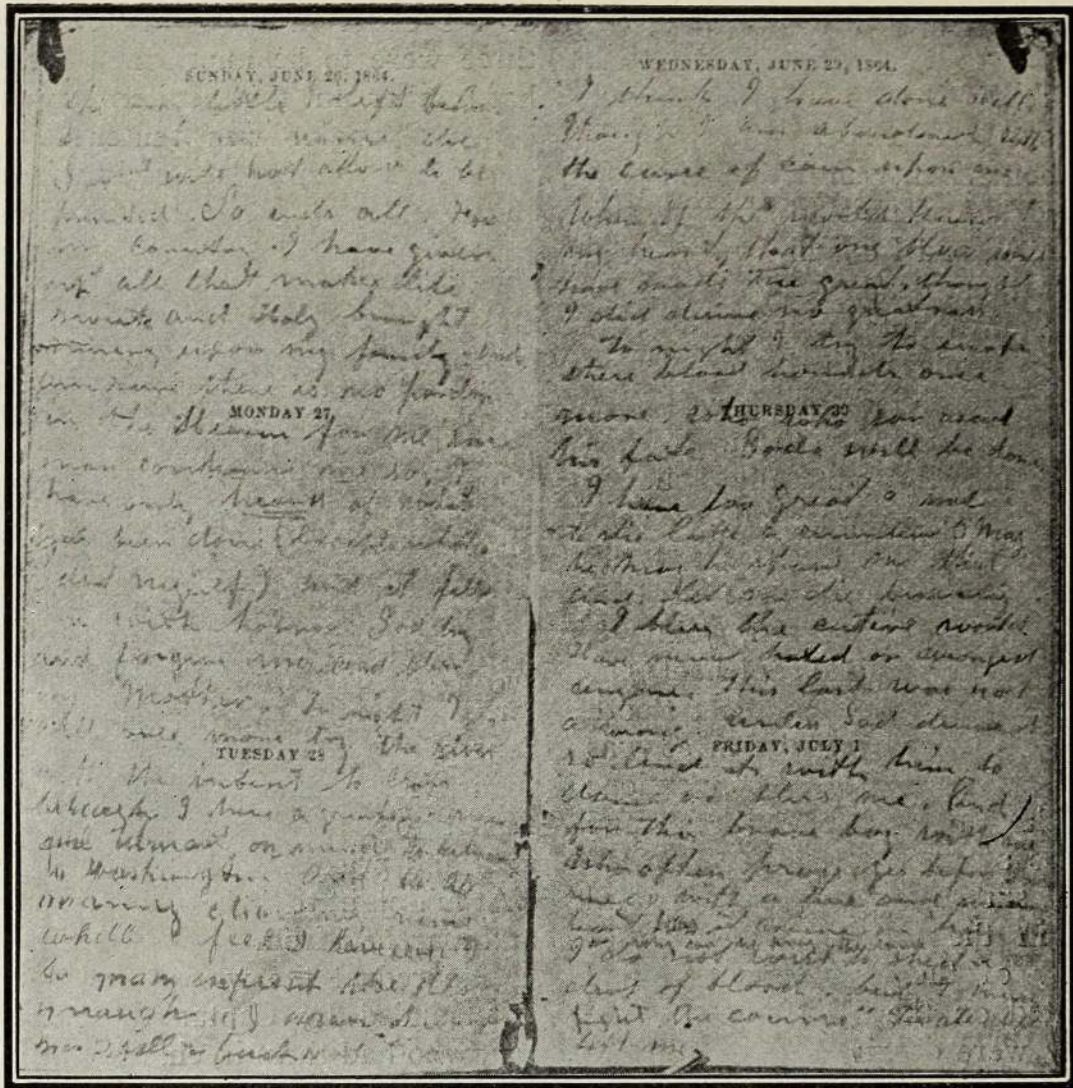
On the same day the Secretary of the Navy issued the following order to Lieutenant-Commander William Budd, commanding U. S. S. *Florida*.

"By request of the Secretary of War you will receive General Dodd, one officer, one sergeant, three corporals, twenty-five men, Assistant Surgeon Porter, Colonel Jones, Judge Advocate, and four prisoners and convey them to Tortugas. As soon as you have landed them report to New York. Issue rations to men and prisoners."

At midnight the prisoners were aroused and marched from their cells to a steamer moored at the wharf, under a guard commanded by Captain Wm. H. Dutton, who had them in charge until turned over at Fort Jefferson. It will be noticed that everything in connection with the moving of the conspirators and the hiding of Booth's body was always done at the same hour, midnight.



The Death of John Wilkes Booth



A Page from John Wilkes Booth's Diary

The very little I left behind to clear my name the Gov't will not allow to be printed. So ends all. For my country I have given up all that makes life sweet and holy, brought misery on my family and am sure there is no pardon in the Heaven for me, since man condemns me so. I have only heard of what has been doing (except what I did myself) and it fills me with horror. God try and forgive me and bless my mother. Tonight I will once more try the river with the intent to cross, although I have a greater desire and almost a mind to return to Washington * * * * I think I have done well, though I am abandoned with the curse of Cain upon me where, if the world knew my heart, that one blow would have made me great, though I did desire no greatness. Tonight I try to escape these bloodhounds once more. Who who can read his fate God's will be done. I have too great a soul to die like a criminal. O may he may he spare me that and let me die bravely. I bless the entire world. I have never hated or wronged anyone. This last was not a wrong, unless God deem it so, and it's with him to damn or bless me. And for this brave boy with me who often prays (yes before and since) was it crime in him, or why can he pray the same. I do not wish to shed a drop of blood, but I must fight the course. It's all that's left me.

[The "brave boy" was David E. Herold, who accompanied Booth in his flight, surrendered just before Booth was killed, and was convicted and hanged with the other conspirators.]

The steamer arrived at Old Point Comfort on the afternoon of July 18th, the prisoners were transferred to a tug which put them on board the gunboat *Florida*. Commander Budd was sailing under sealed orders, which required him to sail four hours straight out to sea, before opening them. We had an idea that we were bound for Concord, where there were many government prisoners confined. After steaming according to orders, we headed due south, stopping the next day at Port Royal for coal, to land stores and two passengers. The prisoners were permitted to exercise on deck, and once aware that the course was due south realized that they were being taken to Tortugas, which Arnold char-

acterized as "hell." We arrived at Fort Jefferson on July 24, 1865 and turned the conspirators over to the commandant, Colonel Charles Hamilton, 110th N. Y. Vols.

Fort Jefferson was surrounded by a deep and wide moat which was filled by the sea. It contained about ten man-eating sharks, which swam about the fort, making escape impossible, and the attempt sure death. The officers used to throw cats into the moat to test the ferocity of the sharks, which rarely permitted the animal to touch the water.

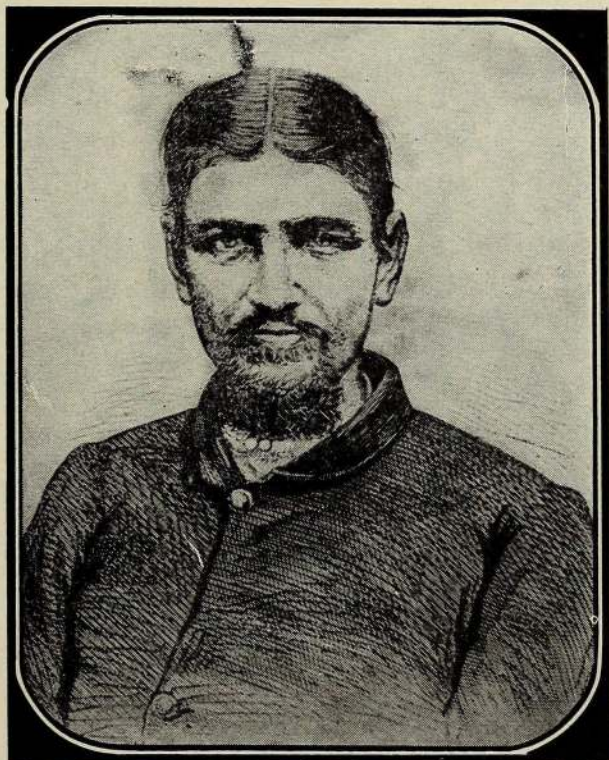
In 1868 yellow fever broke out in the garrison and soon reached the prisoners. After the death of the army surgeon, Dr. Mudd volunteered his services and suc-

ceeded in breaking the back of the epidemic. O'Laughlin was one of the victims. When Mudd contracted the disease, Arnold and Spangler nursed him back to health. A petition, signed by all of the officers of the post, asking for Mudd's pardon was sent to President Johnson who granted the pardon on February 8, 1869, and he was released on March 8th of that year. Arnold and Spangler were pardoned and released later in March.

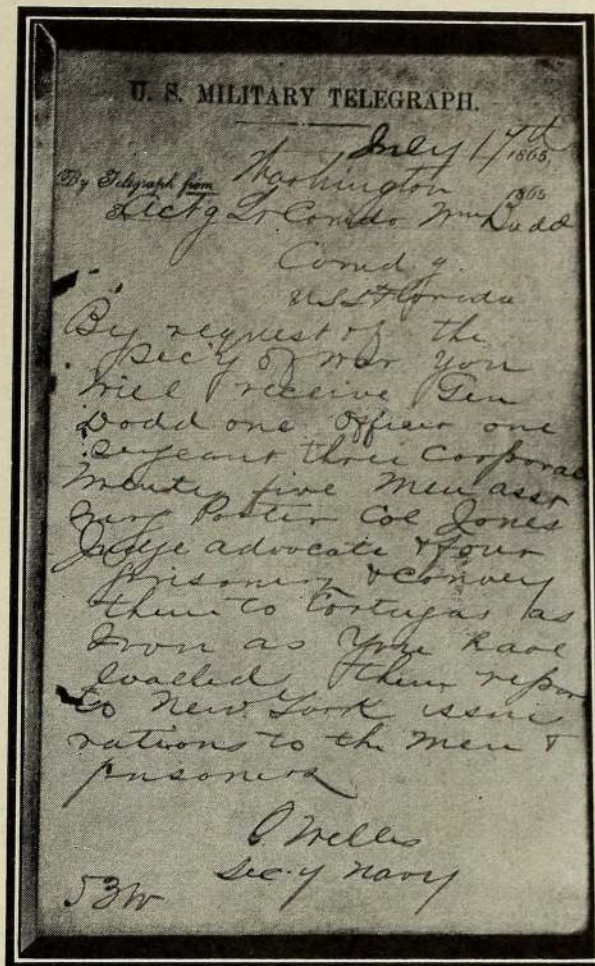
It should be added that John H. Surratt was not in Washington at the time of the murder of President Lincoln. He was captured some years later, and was acquitted by a jury of being a party to the murder. He acknowledged, however, that he had been a Confederate agent and spy, and had been concerned in a plot to kidnap President Lincoln.

There is an impression that all of the conspirators were past middle age at the time of the trial, but such is not the case. Mrs. Surratt was forty-five years old; Dr. Mudd and Atzerodt, thirty-five years; Booth, O'Laughlin and Arnold, twenty-eight years old; Herold, twenty-two; Payne, twenty-one, and John H. Surratt, twenty years of age.

O'Laughlin died of yellow fever September 23, 1867; Spangler at the home of Dr. Mudd, February 27, 1875, and was



Sergeant Boston Corbett, the Man Who Killed Booth



An Order from the Secretary of War

buried in St. Peter's Church graveyard, within two miles of Dr. Mudd's house. Dr. Mudd died January 10, 1883, and sleeps in the Catholic Cemetery of St. Mary's Church, near Bryantown, Md. Whether Arnold is living or dead I am not aware.

When the main part of the old penitentiary building was torn down in 1867, the body of Booth was removed from the place in which we had secreted it to one of the large storehouses situated on the eastern side of the arsenal grounds, together with those of the four who had been executed. There it remained until February, 1869, when President Johnson gave Edwin Booth permission to remove it to Baltimore, Md., where it now reposes in the Booth lot in Greenmount Cemetery.

After receiving permission from the President to remove his brother's body, Edwin Booth ordered a Baltimore undertaker, J. H. Weaver, to do the work. Mr. Weaver called upon Harvey & Marr, of Washington, to assist him, who went to the arsenal grounds for the remains.



E. M. Sleblin (on the bench), Howard Stockton and Dr. Porter

Edwin Booth accompanied Messrs. Weaver and Harvey to the arsenal. W. R. Speare, at present an undertaker at 640 F Street, then a boy, drove the furniture wagon that brought the remains of the assassin to the alley in the rear of Ford's Theatre, almost to the very door from which he started on the night of April 14, 1865.

The wagon backed up to the door of the stable that Booth had formerly used. The box was somewhat decayed, but the lettering on it was legible. When the box was opened and the body taken from the army blanket which enshrouded it, it was seen that four years had brought decay. The skull was detached, and, when lifted out, a dentist identified his work, thus proving the identity of the body beyond a doubt.

Edwin Booth, who was in the front office of the theatre, was informed of the identification of the remains, expressed his satisfaction and directed Mr. Weaver to take the body to Baltimore. A plain coffin was taken out to the stable, the remains placed in it and taken to Baltimore.

The following letter shows the final disposition of the body of the assassin of Abraham Lincoln:

"OFFICE OF SUPT. GREENMOUNT CEMETERY,

Baltimore, May 25, 1892.

The remains of J. Wilkes Booth were interred in this cemetery in February or March, 1869, being brought from Washington, D. C., by Jno. H. Weaver, undertaker, since deceased.

ALEX. RUSSELL,
Foreman."

This copy of the undertaker's bill, together with the burial permit number, should settle, for all time, all controversy as to the final resting place of Booth:

"Permit 16821.

BALTIMORE, MD., Feb. 18, 1869.

Mr. J. H. WEAVER for J. W. BOOTH.

For digging one lot 9-10 area	
Dogwood	\$4.00
250 bricks at \$2.00 per 100.....	6.25
Seven feet stone slab to cover	
same, 75c. per foot.....	5.63
Depositing in vault.....	5.00
Second bill June 26, 1869.....	5.00
	<hr/>
	\$25.88"

The remains of Mrs. Surratt rest in the Catholic Mount Olivet Cemetery.



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