

[CHAPTER III]

[D., Monday, April 10, 1865]

I left home this morning to be absent again for nearly three months. Before leaving home we had [heard] the booming of cannon at Delavan and were at a loss to determine the cause, but I learned that the Rebellion had received another heavy stroke through the surrender of Lee and his whole army. I soon saw indication of enthusiastic rejoicing, and on arriving in Chicago I found the city profusely adorned with flags of all sizes and great crowds in the streets. There was a great procession in the afternoon, fireworks in the evening, and boisterous enjoyment during the whole day.

[D., Tuesday, April 11, 1865]

Today I resumed the routine of school duties, greek, latin, and geology. I do not feel quite as much like study as I did before going home. My feelings now, with three months work before me are quite different from my feelings when the pleasures of vacation were before me. . . .

[D., Friday, April 14, 1865]

This evening we had a fine debate in our society on the question "Resolved that to an American the study of the modern languages is preferable to the study of the ancient." . . .

[L., Saturday, April 15, 1865]

Dear Friends at Home

Before this reaches you, you will have heard the sad news of the assassination of our President, plain, honest, faithful, patient, Abraham Lincoln. It seems an irreparable loss just at the present crisis in our national affairs, and it seems too bad that he should fall thus as approached completion the great work which Providence cast upon him. Seward, too, word comes, has fallen by the hand of the assassin. With all his faults, he was the right hand man [of] our late President, and had the courage and principle to avow that much abused sentiment "The Higher Law" than any made by man. Seward has been much blamed, and perhaps justly, for his conservative course during this war, but it seems to be generally admitted that he has displayed great ability as a diplomatist in keeping from us a foreign war when we had on our hands already more than we could accomplish. Lincoln and Seward, the beloved head of the nation and his faithful right hand man. Suppose they had been taken from us four years ago? Who can tell what would have been the result! Would we have had the Emancipation Proclamation? Would the forces of the Union be victorious at the present time? No one can tell. But it was not to be so.

This act, it seems to me, can only bring harm to the dying rebel cause, and though it is probable there were but few engaged in it, the stigma of the crime will attach itself to the Rebels, all. It is a strange coincidence that just four years ago the President issued his proclamation calling out seventy five thousand volunteers.

Lincoln and Seward are martyrs to the cause they have been working in. They will be looked upon with greater feelings of respect than they would have been if they had lived to come down again to the condition of private citizens.

The winding of the rebel cause in the hands of Andy Johnson will fare worse than it would have from Lincoln. True, he showed a weakness on inauguration day, but the principles of patriotism are stout within him, and I think he is a man of courage and fairness. I presume he will appoint some such man as Sumner or Hale as Sec. of State, more radical than Seward. "Out of the frying pan into the fire."

What events have been crowding upon us during the past two weeks. We can hardly appreciate their magnitude. Truly, we shall look back upon these times as stirring days.

[D.] . . . I visited the city in the afternoon and found the emblems of mourning almost universally displayed. The streets were crowded, but all was quiet. The expression of sorrow at our loss and fear for the future was greater than I expected. Many seemed to mourn the loss as though it had been a personal grief. [L.] . . . The University is to be draped in mourning. I have heard that a man was shot dead this forenoon in front of the Sherman house for expressing joy at the murder of Lincoln. The truth or falsehood of the report I cannot determine.

Yours in haste Elon N. Lee.

[D., Sunday, April 16, 1865]

The sad intelligence of yesterday was still in all minds, and was the subject of mention in almost every sermon. Pulpits were draped in mourning, and in two of the churches I attended the picture of Abraham Lincoln was displayed. . . . His praise was spoken in the highest terms, and severe words were showered upon the heads of the leaders of the rebellion and all their allies.

[D., Monday, April 17, 1865]

At chapel exercises President Burroughs made some appropriate remarks and said that "there never was greater occasion for the young men of our country to forth efforts to prepare themselves to battle with life's duties." Mr. Rowley stated in the geology class that, "owing to the feeling caused by the late tragedy he had not been able to study."

The death of the President has caused a profound sensation which will not soon die away. Many of the supporters of Mr. Lincoln feel an almost personal bereavement, and seemed to have loved and trusted in him to an unconscious extent.

[D., Tuesday, April 18, 1865]

How fast we are living, and what momentous events are crowding upon us. We can hardly appreciate the importance of the events of the last few days. The long sought for and long fought for capital of the Confederacy is at last ours. The main army of the Rebel States has at last surrendered. The backbone is again and finally broken, and the war is really over. Our President, our leader in this great struggle, has fallen as none of his predecessors ever have. And the same crime has been attempted upon another of our leaders. Truly, these are eventful days.

[D., Wednesday, April 19, 1865]

Today, at the hour appointed for the funeral exercises of the President at Washington meetings were assembled in the churches throughout the North.*

* [A letter from his mother dated April 21, 1865 states: "There was quite a demonstration of joy over the capture of Richmond. . . . and a day appointed for celebration but but [sic] before the day arived [sic] the death of the President cast a gloom over the community. Sabath the pulpit was ornamented with the flag and draped in mourning. I should think there was as much as a whole peice [sic] of black cloth beside the crape around the pulpit. On wednesday the funeral was at the Baptist church. The Rev. Brand preached to a crowded house[.] his sermon was very well spoken of by all. . . . "]

The shadow of a great grief still hangs over the people.

I attended the exercises at the First Baptist Ch. . . .

[L., Wednesday, April 19, 1865]

Dear Father Mother and Brother

. . . School exercises are suspended today on account of the public services to be held today in the churches. . . .

The crime committed last Friday night has created here, as throughout the country, a profound sensation. People could not give credence to the astounding intelligence until the proofs were such that the fact could not be doubted. The personal and political friends of President Lincoln were stricken with sorrow, and even the bitter enemies of him and his policy I think felt true sorrow and indignation. The expression of mourning for the great national calamity was almot universal. The streets were for miles decked with thousands of clustering festoons, flying streamers, rosettes, and flags in mourning. The intermingled black and white was

displayed everywhere. Pictures of Lincoln were displayed everywhere, many of them trimmed with the black and white. Inscriptions were to be met with frequently. In one dry goods store I noticed, formed of lace collars, the words, "The dead still live." "The nation mourns." Perhaps you will remember that Saturday forenoon an official dispatch came saying that Seward also was dead. One of the finest things I saw that afternoon was in commemoration of the departure of the two. It was on a flag, half of it colored dark and in it depicted a picture representing, I suppose, the angel of death, his hand, reaching out into the light, held a branch over the heads of Lincoln and Seward. I suppose it represented the summons of the angels of death.

Many places of business were closed and the sidewalks were thronged with people, quiet crowds even larger than during the jubilee of the Monday before, but instead of the noisy shouts, the procession with music, tin horns and bells or the tipsy revelers, the crowd moved along quietly, and expressions of sorrow, of denunciation, and of fear for the future of the nation were to be heard on every side. The contrast was marked, and the appearance of the crowd was solemn. Of course there were exceptions, and one I shall mention. A female was passing near the post office, and speaking to the effect that "she was glad Lincoln was dead" or ["]that he deserved to die," she jerked down some of the drapery. An indignant crowd gathered around but she escaped into the store and passed out through another door.

. . .

[D., Friday, April 21, 1865]

I was on the debate this evening on the question, "Resolved that attorneys tend more to thwart than to promote justice." Aff. Hammers and Harris. Neg. Smith and Lee. I dreaded the debate, and until five o'clock in the afternoon I had not given five minutes consideration to the subject. When I went out upon the floor the first time I felt fear, when there I could not think what to say, and when I returned to my seat I felt provoked and disgusted with myself. The second time my words came more readily and I became more interested in the subject. Mr. Smith did well, as he always does, but the decision was against us.

[L., Sunday, April 23, 1865]

Dear Brother George

I intended to write to you yesterday but I was kept busy all day, and in the evening I went to Bryan Hall to listen to a eulogy on President Lincoln by Rev. Mr. Hatfield. The hall was beautifully draped. Behind the speaker was an arch containing the words "An honest man is the noblest work of God." Above this was an eagle, of course not a live one. Upon the desk was worked a beautiful white cross. There was some very fine music, and in the closing hymn, "America," the whole audience joined and poured forth a mighty volume of sound. The eulogy was a fine production, and used very strong terms of praise, such as no one but a partizan speaker would have ventured to use, two weeks ago. How our language is altered concerning a public man as soon as he is gone from us. But still, I suppose that is right.

Preparations are being made for a fitting reception of the remains of our late President. The body will arrive here at 11.00 A. M. Monday May 1st, and remain here until 9.30 Tuesday P. M. remaining here longer than at any other point on the journey.

It is possible that we shall go on another geological excursion over the C. B. & Q. R. R., starting tomorrow night at 12.00, and returning towards the close of the week. But I cannot say. We should have gone last week if it had not been for the circumstances unnecessary to mention which made it seem almost improper to start out on such a trip.

. . .

[D., Saturday, April 29, 1865]

. . . In the afternoon Mr. First and I went to the Opera. The music was fine. The scenery was good. The costumes were in good taste without the fault of coarse exaggeration [sic] which the stage often shows. And the acting seemed to me the best representation of of [sic] feeling I had ever seen.

[L., Sunday, April 30, 1865]

Dear Father Mother and Brother

Having just returned from the city I improve a few moments by writing to you. With several other students I attended a memorial address upon President Lincoln by Hon. Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the last Congress. It was delivered at Bryan Hall. The house was packed, and stormy as it was, hundreds went away, unable to gain admittance. The address was eloquent, and though it did not go to the extent of unbounded adulation which some eulogies have done, it was an eloquent tribute to the worth of a personal friend. There was a warm friendship between the two, and in company with Mr. Ashman [he] made the last call upon the President upon that fatal night. Mr. Colfax said that Lincoln always felt restive when the precaution was taken by Secretary Stanton to provide him with a guard

escort. He mentioned that once he brought a pardon to Mr. Lincoln to be signed. Says Mr. Lincoln, "Some of our generals complain that by the use of the pardoning power I impair the discipline of the army. But after a day of care and toil if I can bring joy to some heart I can sleep quietly." And as he signed the pardon he said, "How glad that soldier and his relatives will feel!" The address abounded in interesting facts which had come within his own knowledge, and closed with these words, "He has stepped from the topmost round of the ladder of fame to his eternal rest in the heavens." The speech was delivered under the auspices of the Christian Commission and I should judge from the remarks of the speaker, that he himself was a christian man. [D.] . . . He did not seem to indulge in praise because people wished to hear it, but he spoke like a friend who believes what he says. My opinion of him was raised considerably. [L.] After this was delivered a proposition was given to the audience by J. Y. Scammon banker for a monument [to] President Lincoln in this city. Not a granite shaft or a statue in marble or in bronze, but something more enduring and more in consonance with the character of the man it is proposed to honor. A building to be called the Lincoln Institute like the Cooper Institute in New York, or, I presume, the Smithsonian in Washington, with a large hall for speeches, lectures, etc., and an Emancipation hall containing the statue of Lincoln and other statesmen who assisted in the deed it is proposed to commemorate. A committee of twentyone of the solid men of the city, was proposed to carry out the measure, and the whole project was approved of by the assembly. Tomorrow the remains of the President are to arrive here, and though the streets are in a disagreeable condition, they will be met by a very great procession. The University of Chicago has its place assigned in the procession. The Court House has been prepared for the reception of the body,

and it will lie there in state. The columns around the dome have been tastefully wound with black and white. I think that nowhere have such preparations been made for the sad occasion as here. A large number of distinguished men are to be present, among them several major generals, brigadier generals, governors and congressmen from various parts of the west. Truly, no man in this nation was ever before honored with such testimonials of respect and sorrow.

I went this [morning] to the 1st Baptist Church to hear one of the students preach, and walked the whole distance, about three miles. I had a ticket given to me by one of my roommates, to attend a lecture given this evening under the auspices of the Sanitary commission, but for some cause it was postponed.

We took our geological tour last week, starting on Monday night at twelve and returning on Saturday morning, of [which] perhaps I will speak more at length, if you wish me to at some other time. . . .

Grandfather will arrive here on Thurs. morning at six o'clock. I shall try to meet them at the depot, but in order to do so I shall be obliged to rise before day. Still, I shall try to see them.

I have written hastily because it is getting late and I want to finish this tonight. . . .

Enclosed I send a three cent piece of postal currency. I think I heard father say when I was at home that he had never seen one. . . .

Write soon.

With much affection Yours · Elon N. Lee.

P.S. For once money is going the other way.

[L., Wednesday, May 3, 1865]

Dear Father Mother and Brother

I propose to take a short time this evening in giving an account of the occurrences on Monday and Tuesday upon the arrival and during the stay of the remains of our dead President. Such a demonstration as was witnessed on Monday never occurred before in this city. The procession itself of societies associations etc with a great variety of regalias, banners, and badges, must have included some thousands, the Journal says fifty. An important feature of the procession was the public schools numbering a few thousands. This part of the procession was long and some who thought it uninteresting were disposed to find fault, but I thought it was quite as important that they should do honor to the occasion as the older ones. I think that those children, though some of them were not, indeed, handsome or well-dressed, will remember the solemn occasion through life, and, perhaps, receive some good influence from it. Another was a zouave company of little boys with a band of music, playing a solemn march. At the head of the procession rode Major Gen. Hooker and a number of other officers. Next came the funeral car drawn by twelve black horses with a colored man at the head of each one. The car and the coffin were wo rich and so tastefully decorated that I will not attempt to describe. After this came the friends and relatives, numerous generals, congressmen, governors, and other officers, members of the bar and the procession of societies. For an hour and a half the procession filed through the court house where the coffin, not yet opened, lay in state. The catafalco for the reception of the remains was in the rotunda. The coffin rested on a slightly inclined plane, under a dome supported by four pillars. The whole decorated with silver and velvet in a manner beyond my power to describe. The whole rotunda was draped in black and overhead was hung with alternate threads of black and white. Towards night the coffin was opened for the

inspection of the people and remained so until the next night. . . .
[D.] Of course there was no school yesterday or today on account of the exercises in honor of our dead President. During the whole night the remains had been accessible to the people and as the day advanced the throng of those who wished to take a look at that face increased and poured constantly through the south door of the court house and out by the north door. At noon the procession filled the sidewalk for over half a mile. It extended from the north entrance of the court house down Washington St. to State St. thence to Madison, then west to Clark St. [L.] And as the procession was passing through, all the time, the music of a mournful dirge fell upon the ear from the hall above. Those who looked for the first time upon the face of President Lincoln seemed surprised at the smallness of his features. His face was thin and his forehead and chin retreating. Some people, I think, were disappointed because he did not look as they expected, did not look as they fancied great men did.

In the evening the funeral remains were escorted to the St. Louis depot by a torchlight procession, and so all is passed, and the world will move on with other men [to] guide our national affairs, but his influence will continue to be felt. What a mighty work has been done under his supervision during the last four years!

Yours Elon N. Lee.

[D., Wednesday, May 3, 1865]

Today I am back at my studies, and in common with many others my lessons were rather poor. The interruptions to our studies have been