

## THE PASSING OF LINCOLN

THREE-SCORE and five years ago, on an April night, the vast majority of people in the Northern States went to bed with thankful and relieved hearts. For, on April 9th, Lee had surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. President Lincoln, on the following day, had returned to Washington from the seat of War, and Washington had gone mad with joy at the now certain end of the long strife. This joy had spread, of course, all over the loyal States, for now the cruel war was over; the boys in blue would soon be coming home hoping that years of peace would follow the years of conflict.

There had been happy hearts in the White House on that April day, and President Lincoln had permitted himself some terribly needed relaxation. He had driven out with Mrs. Lincoln that afternoon, and, as they rode, husband and wife had planned happily for the coming years when the great burdens of the nation should have been taken from his shoulders.

He had even consented to add to the relaxation of the drive an evening at the theatre, for he had ever dearly loved a good play and could this night see his way clear to enjoy one with a contented mind.

Here, in the city of Providence that night, the citizens who had lain down with thankful and relieved hearts were rudely awakened some time after midnight by a wild alarum of pealing bells. Their long and insistent clangor brought weary men, perhaps grumbling, out of their warm beds. "What could be the cause of the alarm? Was not the war over at last? Was a man never again to enjoy a well-earned night's rest?" One old man, a child in the cradle that night, remembers well hearing his parents tell how

his father roused and dressed and hastened to the centre of the city to ascertain the cause of the clamor. Soon he returned with white face to tell his family the news. He threw open the outside door and, standing on the threshold, announced in solemn voice: "The President of the United States has been shot by an assassin!"

Next morning came the news of the President's death, and the wildest excitement prevailed. There was much uncertainty at first. Men did not know how widespread might be the plot to destroy the heads of the Nation. Perhaps the comforting words had not yet reached them: "*God reigns, and the Government at Washington still lives.*"

Mr. Lincoln was shot on April 14th, which was Good Friday. When the news of his death was received on the following day, the bells of Providence tolled for an hour, and minute-guns were fired by the Marine Artillery. This was repeated in the evening, when the bells tolled again and the minute-guns sounded from 5.30 to 6.30 o'clock.

The students at Brown assembled that morning at 10.30 o'clock in Manning Hall, and Professors Diman, Harkness and Dunn addressed them.

Committees were appointed from the classes to work with the Faculty in drafting resolutions of sympathy and the gathering adjourned singing: "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past."

At eight o'clock on Saturday evening a procession of citizens, numbering probably 1500 people, formed on Westminster Street near the bridge and marched, under the direction of Ex-Governor Hoppin, in a drenching rain and to the mournful music of the American Brass Band to the home of Ex-President Wayland, who addressed them.

The *Providence Journal* of April 17, 1865, printed the following editorial:

"Such scenes were never before witnessed in this City as we beheld on Saturday. There was lamentation in every household as the death had crossed the threshold. The men of business forgot their buying and selling, and shed tears of grief as they met each other on the public streets. We never saw a community so weighed down with sorrow . . . Long before evening nearly every house and store and public building bore testimony to the universal sadness. Yesterday, although it was the glad Easter Day, the churches were dressed in mourning and some of the clergy and almost every worshiper wore badges of some kind, expressing grief . . .

"President Lincoln, at this proud hour of his triumph and glory, when it seemed that he was about to enjoy in peace and quietness the fruits of his four years' arduous toil, has perished by the hand of a miserable miscreant. Too early, alas! for us he has fallen, but not too early for him. He will stand in all history as a canonized martyr to the Cause of Liberty and Human Right!"

With words like these in our ears it is hard for us, who have seldom heard the name of Lincoln mentioned save with reverence, to realize what he had in life to bear.

Mrs. Maud Howe Elliott has told us that she once fled in burning indignation to her mother, saying: "Mother, did you ever, in all your life, know of anyone so maligned as is our friend Mr. Roosevelt?"

The aged Julia Ward Howe deliberately withheld her answer and took a moment to look back down the years of her long life. Then her answer came with decision. "Yes, I knew one." "Who was he, mother? Who could it have been?"

And Julia Ward Howe replied with solemn emphasis: "*Abraham Lincoln!*"

And let us add the testimony of another of America's greatest, the word of the late Edward Everett Hale. Dr. Hale wrote: "With the news of the murder of Lincoln, there came to New York every other terrible message. The office of the *New York Tribune*, of course, received echoes from all the despatches which showed the alarm at Washington. There were orders for the arrest of this man, there were suspicions of the loyalty of that man. No one knew what the rumors might bring.

"In the midst of the anxieties of such hours, to Mr. Sidney Howard Gay, the acting editor of that paper there, entered the foreman of the type-setting room. He brought with him the proof of Mr. Greeley's leading article, as he had left it before leaving the

city for the day. It was a brutal, bitter, sarcastic, personal attack on President Lincoln, the man who, when Gay read the article, lay dying in Washington.

"Gay read the article and asked the foreman if he had any private place where he could lock up the type to which no one but himself had access. The foreman said he had. Gay bade him tie up the type, lock the galley with this article in his cupboard, and tell no one what he had told him. Of course no such article appeared in the *Tribune* next morning.

"But when Gay arrived on the next day at the office, he was met with the news that 'the old man' wanted him, with the intimation that 'the old man' was very angry.

"Gay waited upon Greeley. 'Are you there, Mr. Gay? I have been looking for you. They tell me that you ordered my leader out of this morning's paper. Is this your paper or mine? I should like to know if I cannot print what I please in my own paper.' This in great rage.

"The paper is yours, Mr. Greeley. The article is in type upstairs and you can use it when you choose. Only this, Mr. Greeley, I know New York, and I hope and I believe before God, that there is so much virtue in New York that if I had let that article go into this morning's paper, there would not be one brick left upon another in the *Tribune* office now. Certainly I should be sorry if there were.' Mr. Greeley was cowed. He said not a word, nor ever alluded to the subject again."

Before the end of that tragic April, Booth had been captured and had died from a bullet wound. In the brief interval between Mr. Lincoln's death and the assassin's apprehension it is said that the latter had access to newspapers and was astounded to find that instead of acclaims for his deed from the South, the South joined the North in a feeling of horror at his crime. Now, more than a half-century after his death, the probable concensus of opinion is that Booth was not a fiend. He was a fanatic. After his death his diary was taken from his pocket and in it was found written: "I am sure there is no pardon in Heaven for me, since man condemns me so." One who knew him well has written, ". . . he was no common assassin. Some overpowering force of evil must have been at work within his frenzied brain.

Amid his associates and with those who knew him well, he was loved for his kindly nature, his generousities, and the qualities of a refined gentleman."

After Booth's miserable ending at least nine other persons implicated in the plot were indicted. Of these, four were executed on July 7, 1865, three were sentenced to hard labor for life, one to hard labor for six years. The ninth person escaped and fled across the ocean and we find no record at hand to tell if he was ever apprehended and punished.

At the close of the Civil War, Francis Wilson, in his "Life of John Wilkes Booth," says of Lincoln: "He had labored amid distrust, toleration and contempt against almost irresistible opposition from within and without. He now stood revealed to the world as the most gentle, most magnanimous, most Christ-like ruler of all time."

But, in closing these notes of his death what words could be more fitting than the words of Stanton at the moment of Lincoln's passing? Secretary Stanton said:

"NOW HE BELONGS TO THE AGES."

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