An Account of Two Visits to Abraham Lincoln,

at Washington, 1861-1865.

His Remembrance of having been a guest of Mr. Clay at Ashland 1844 — and of persons whom he met.

His last hours — The Autopsy.

By

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Lexington, Kentucky.

1895.
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The slightest addition to the World's history of Abraham Lincoln
will no doubt be welcomed. A relative, therefore contributes his recol-
lections of him on three occasions, including an account of his last
hours.

I visited Mr. Lincoln in Washington twice: on the 14th of April
1861, and on the 14th of April 1865 - a co-incidence of dates as remark-
able as it was undesigned. I purpose to write now for the first time my
reollections of both visits. My first was pleasant, both because Mr.
Lincoln received me with the cordial greeting and the genial manner so
characteristic of his loving and gentle nature, and because he was pleased
to gratify me in the chief object of my visit by placing in my hands
my commission as Post Master at Lexington, Kentucky. He referred to, and
talked with evident delight of his first visit to Lexington, the birth-
place of his wife, who was my cousin - Our fathers being brothers.
That visit was due to an invitation of Henry Clay. In the hotly contested presidential campaign of 1844, Mr. Lincoln was the enthusiastic Champion of the Whigs of Illinois, and naturally a leader so conspicuous had caught the eye of Mr. Clay. Accordingly, Mr. Lincoln came to Lexington in August of that year to meet at Ashland some of the leading Whigs of Kentucky, and to discuss with them measures for the success of their party in the pending campaign. Well do I remember his appearance at that time; for young boy though I was, I had taken my side in the exciting contest with my Father who was a great admirer of Mr. Clay, and of course was much interested in my relative and saw him frequently. His admirers in Illinois had presented him with a coon-skin cap a reminder of the Harrison campaign of 1840, in which the coon had been adopted by the Whigs as their party emblem to contest honors with the Democratic cock. Lincoln was so proud of his present that he declared he would wear it to Kentucky, and wear it he did, even in the presence and the parlor of Henry Clay. Little did Clay think that he who was his grotesque looking young guest and henchman of thirty five, wearing his outlandish cap with its nodding tail for a plume would in twenty years be the greatest of liberators, that he would play a part in history, beyond the part of Gustavus Vasa or of Orange, beyond the part of Cromwell or of Bolivar, and that his fame would be matched, if matched at all, by the fame of Washington alone. On that August day a notable company met around the hospitable board at Ashland. There were assembled Judge George Robertson
Chief Justice of the Commonwealth - Senator John J. Crittenden; Robt. P. Letcher - Charles S. Morehead, each of them afterwards its Governor: Garrett Davis, then Congressman - afterwards U.S. Senator - Mr. Robert S. Todd, Lincoln's father-in-law, then much talked of for Governor - and Mr. Nagle, the Philadelphia Artist - who was commissioned by the Whigs of that City to paint the portrait of Mr. Clay that became so famous from the engraved copies. Naturally enough the memory of his visit at Ashland was at once revived in Mr. Lincoln's mind on his meeting me in Washington, and he dwelt upon the day and its incidents with manifest pleasure.

It was during the morning of the 14th of April 1865 that I met Mr. Lincoln in Washington the second time. He was bright and cheerful at the prospect of peace, and when I left him, he kindly invited me to call again the next day at noon, - a noon alas! that for him in this world never came. At that noon I returned indeed to the White House to witness a scene the most thrilling of all my life. But I anticipate. The evening of the 14th of April I spent at the National Hotel with my cousin John Blair Smith Todd then a Delegate in Congress from Dakota. I left his room about half past ten, and as I passed through the entrance hall, towards the front door, a gentleman came rushing in, and in a most
excited manner exclaimed, "My God, Sir, I wonder if it can be true?"

"What can be true?" I asked. "A little newsboy," said he, "has just cried out, 'Lincoln is assassinated.'" Not waiting to reply I hurried out of the hotel and up the avenue to the White House. The first person I met and knew was Ex-Gov. Richard Yates - Senator from Illinois. I had met him in April 1862 at Pittsburgh Landing, whither we had gone on a Sanitary Boat just after the Battle of Shiloh. "Senator," I asked, "can the horrible news be true, that Mr. Lincoln has been assassinated?"

"It is true," he replied; and we stepped aside for a few minutes out of the crowd that was already surging up and down the avenue. Never can I forget the Senator's words and manner as he said "Doctor Todd I was this evening at Ford's Theatre to see "The American Cousin," when all at once I heard a shot, saw a man jump down out of one of the boxes on to the stage, run half way along it, stop, face the audience, brandish a gleaming knife, cry out 'Sic semper tyrannis,' turn and vanish. So sudden and dramatic was all this that really I thought it was a part of the play. Just as the man had uttered the last word Laura Keene, the actress, who was just then about to come on to the stage drawing aside the curtain appeared and shrieked "Wilkes Booth - by G-d." And so she was the first to announce to the world the name of the man that shot Mr. Lincoln. She then called loudly for a surgeon, and Dr. McMillan of our city of Lexington, who was that day commissioned Surgeon in General Hancock Veteran
Corps was in the audience: he leaped upon the stage, was lifted into the box, and in a moment exclaimed, "The President is fatally shot!" Leaving Senator Yates I hurried on to the White House, where I met the well-known door-keeper who was pale as ashes and fearfully agitated. "Where is Mr. Lincoln?" I asked. He replied that he had been carried into the house directly opposite to Ford's Theatre. I was the guest of my relative Genl. Thomas M. Vincent — now of Genl. Schofield's staff, and I hastened to his home and finding him in his library reading, I told him the fearful news that the President had been assassinated and that conspirators had attempted to kill some of the cabinet. Genl. Vincent at once asked "What of Secretary Stanton?" We hurried to Mr. Stanton's and found the house under guard, Stanton himself being absent. On our way to the President, we passed the residence of Secretary Seward, which also was heavily guarded. A messenger on the door-step was telling the inquiring crowd of the attempt made on the lives of the Secretary and his son and announcing their condition. Arriving at the house in front of the Theatre, we found it guarded by triple lines of infantry and cavalry. General Vincent being a well-known officer, we were allowed to pass and at the door we met Maj. Genl. Augur, Military Governor of the District. Entering, I found in the parlor on the left of the short and narrow hall,
Mrs. Lincoln, her Son Robert Todd Lincoln, and the wife of the owner of the house. In the paroxysms of her overwhelming grief, Mrs. Lincoln tried to tell me how startled, how shocked she had been by the awful apparition of Booth when he rushed by her in the box, how his foot was caught in the folds of her dress, seeing him leap, and sit upon the front railing of the box - cutting at Major Rathbone - jumping down upon the stage - and she realized what he had done. Poor woman, for her there was to be neither perfect reason in this world again nor respite from sorrow. Through a door at the end of the hall I entered the little room where lay the slowly dying President, whom ten hours before I had left, strong, well and happy. Divested of coat, vest and cravat and collar, he was lying obliquely on the bed, which was too short for him. Perfect paralysis had instantly followed the fatal shot; he had uttered not a word, was entirely insensible, and not a muscle of his body moved. The bullet had passed from just back of the left ear through the head and had lodged close behind the right eye. The flesh around the eye was black as ebony, and blood and brain continually oozed from the horrid wound to which napkins were constantly applied. The medical attendants were Dr. Barnes, Surgeon General of the Army, and Drs. Woodward and Crane from his office. Among others about the bed were Secretary Stanton - Secretary Welles - Senator Brown -ing of Illinois - Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts - Genl. Denison - Genl. Thomas M. Vincent - Genl. Jno S.B. Todd and myself.
Of all those present, Mr. Sumner most impressed me. His stalwart frame, massive lionine head and shaggy hair, his classic face and scholarly air, his sad and pensive look I can never forget. He stood at the head of the bed looking down on Mr. Lincoln and it seemed to me he hardly changed his place or posture during all that long night. The Surgeons repeatedly sponged the wound and incessantly applied a napkin. Every thirty minutes the pulse and respiration were noted and a bulletin was issued.

The hours of that eventful night, which, it is no exaggeration to say, was the very saddest that our Country has ever known, went for us slowly and solemnly by, for grief was in every face and sorrow in every heart. Within the room all was silence, few words were spoken and they in the lowest whispers. Without, all was intense excitement: troops hurried hither and thither, guarding every avenue leading from the Capitol: and telegrams flashed in all directions to prevent the escape of the assassin and his confederates. At half past five Dr. Barnes announced, "Mr. Lincoln is rapidly sinking." The breathing which had been loud and sterterous became more and more labored and hurried, the circulation weaker and more rapid. Dr. Barnes requested Genl. Vincent and me to go for the Rev. Dr. Gurley, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church which the President and his family usually attended. He came without delay, entering the parlor on his way, and addressing some words of sympathy and comfort to the
grief-stricken wife and son. Entering the chamber of death, he sat motionless by the bed-side until twenty two minutes after seven o'clock, when Dr. Barnes, turning and looking at Dr. Gurley, silently indicated by uplifted hand that Abraham Lincoln was no more. The minister arose slowly, and agitated as I had never seen any one agitated before, for his entire frame shook, his lips quivered, and for a few moments his tongue refused to do its duty. Becoming more composed, with faltering and tremulous voice, he uttered a short and fervent prayer, and sat down completely overpowered by his emotion. General Vincent closed Mr. Lincoln's eyes and placed coins upon them. Soon after eight o'clock Mr. Stanton arranged for the removal of the body to the Executive Mansion, and left General Vincent to represent him till the transfer had taken place. I may add that to my knowledge, of all those present in that room that night—when the President's death was announced, Hon. Robert Todd Lincoln, Genl. John Hay, Genl. Vincent and myself are the sole survivors. And I am under great obligations to Genl. Vincent—now at Washington—who recently furnished me the following:

From "Abraham Lincoln, A History" Nicholay and Hay.

Persons present when the Surgeon General announced the death of President Lincoln at 7.22 A.M. April 15th, 1865 at 516 Tenth St. Washington—Mrs. Lincoln, Robert Todd Lincoln; M.B. Field, Assistant Secretary:
John Hay, Private Secretary: Alexander Williams, Tutor: Charlie, the President's body servant - Surgeon General Barnes, Surgeon Crane: Rev. Dr. Gurley - Dr. Lyman Beecher Todd. Secretary of War, Stanton - Secretary of the Navy, Welles: Attorney General Speed - Secretary of the Interior Usher: Post Master General Dennison: Secretary of the Treasury McCullough - who left the room a short time before the death, and died in Washington May 22nd, 1895, - Maj. Genl. Hal-leck - Major General Augur: Genl. (then Lieutenant Colonel) Pelouze - Col- onel (then Major) Rockwell: General Farnsworth M. C. Other persons who were at the house during the night: Chief Justice Chase: Chief Justice Carter: (Supreme Court, District of Co- lumbia) Ex-Attorney General Bates: Assistant Secretary of the Interior Otto: Governor Farwell of Wisconsin: Hon. Schuyler Colfax: Col. Todd - As- sistant Secretary to the President.

The Autopsy.

By special invitation of Surgeon General Barnes I was present at the post-mortem examination of President Lincoln. Through me he had extended an invitation to my brother-in-law, Mr. Wm. Edward Swift of Lexington, Ken- tucky who at that time was on duty in the department of War. Exactly at twelve o'clock on Saturday Drs. Barnes - Woodward and Crane with Mr. Swift and myself walked from the library in the Executive Mansion across the wide upper hall into a large front room lighted by three tall win- dows
and facing Lafayette Park. Outside the door stood Maj. General Hardin of Illinois; inside the room were Major Generals Augur and Warren in full uniform serving as a guard of honor to the dead President, and slowly and continually pacing the sides of the room to and fro from corner to corner with their eyes directed straight before them. Mr. Lincoln's body with only the head and neck exposed lay upon an extension table covered with white linen having the national coat of arms embroidered on each end. The Surgeons were in citizens' dress.

To Dr. J.J. Woodward was assigned the performance of the operation, and he performed it quickly, delicately and with skill. He first made an incision through the scalp beginning above and slightly behind the left ear, carrying it around the back of the head to a point directly opposite to the beginning. The scalp was gently and carefully drawn forward and laid over the face. Along the line of incision the upper portion of the skull was removed with a small saw, chisel and ivory mallet and laid upon the table. The brain was observed to be of unusual size and well developed. A knife with long, slender and keen blade was used in removing the brain in thin layers, which were carefully laid upon the table; and thus layer after layer was removed until the track of the bullet was reached. The bullet had made a dark furrow through the brain and was found in the brain tissue immediately behind the right eye. With a pair of forceps Dr. Barnes raised the bullet from its place and carefully
examining it, he observed that it had been slightly indented in passing through the bone. He then placed the bullet upon the palm of the hand of each person present, and finally into his pocket case. Every minute portion of the tissue was restored as carefully as it had been removed: the section of the skull was exactly adjusted to its place and firmly fastened there by sixteen small silver clasps made for the purpose by a jeweller of Washington: the integument was restored evenly and smoothly and made fast by a number of silken sutures. Indeed the entire operation was so skillfully performed that no casual observer would have noticed that the head had been disturbed. When all was over, General Hardin entered, and handed me a pair of scissors, requesting me to cut a few locks of hair for Mrs. Lincoln. I carefully cut and delivered them to General Hardin, and then secured one for myself which I have preserved as a sacred relic.

The embalmer was then introduced and we retired. I was exceedingly gratified to know that he performed his service satisfactorily, for I looked upon Mr. Lincoln’s face in Washington — on the day of the funeral — and also at Indianapolis and Chicago and finally at Springfield his home and the resting place of his mortal remains.

Lyman Beecher Todd, M.D.

Lexington, Kentucky,

1865