BIXBY LETTER

Dr. Finley tells me that Charles More of the MS Department of the Congressional Library told him that he believed that the Bixby letter was written by John Hay. What reason he has for believing this I do not know.

I said at once that John Hay had gone on his foreign mission by November 1864 when the letter was written. Looking it up when I returned home I found that Hay did not leave this country until June, 1865, when he went as secretary of Legation to Paris. I ought to have remembered this because I have more than once noted that Hay and Robert Lincoln talked together at the White House when the news of Lincoln's assassination came to them.

Of course, then, as far as time and place are concerned Hay might have written the Bixby letter, but, as I wrote Dr. Finley, it seems to me if he had it would have more style. There is some of Lincoln's ponderous phrasing in it, but such feeling! I never thought it one of Lincoln's happiest efforts. Its strength is the fact that he did it and the feeling with which he wrote, also the unusual fact that he is writing to a woman who is supposed to have lost four sons in the war. Dr. Barton has proved that at most it was not over two.

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