

The
PALIMPSEST

APRIL 1940

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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The Glorious Day

“Victory! Victory! Lee has surrendered!
Grand celebration to-day! Victory!”

Just seventy-five years ago, at ten o'clock on Monday morning, April 10, 1865, this shout of “Victory” issued from the office of the *Cedar Falls Gazette*. As the street door swung open, boys with limp bundles of one-page, handbill “extras”, smelling pungently of printer's ink, burst into Main Street. Their shrill voices carried the cry north to the Millrace Bridge and south along the four business blocks to the schoolhouse on Fifth Street. Empty handed they returned for the second printing of the “glorious news”. With this fresh supply some of the boys ran across the Millrace and Cedar River bridges to “Dane Town”; and others went south and west to the residential districts. By this time men on horseback waited restively outside the *Gazette* office to grasp the third batch of broadsheets as they came from the press and to gallop north toward Janes-

ville, west toward New Hartford, and south toward Hudson.

From ten o'clock, on that warm April morning, merchants and clerks crowded the wooden sidewalks of the trading center. The children broke loose from school. Washday forgotten, women carrying babies and leading toddlers joined the noisy crowds. The excitement grew contagious. Men shouted themselves hoarse. A heavy rope bearing two immense American flags was hurriedly stretched across the street from the roof of the three-story Overman Block to the chimney of the Carter House. Merchants displayed flags in their store windows. Horses, caparisoned with flags, pranced up and down the main thoroughfare. The old cannon which four years before had welcomed "the iron horse and the iron rails" was dragged to the corner of Second and Main streets. Its "deep booming basso" urged farmers living within sound of it to saddle their riding horses or to load their families into surreys and hurry to town.

Earlier that morning the railroad agent at the depot, answering the signal of the telegraph receiver, listened intently as it clicked out the official news of Lee's surrender. At nine o'clock the night before, Secretary Stanton had sent the following message from the War Department to Major

General John A. Dix at New York. Thence it was relayed to Dubuque and from there to J. B. Cavanaugh, the telegraph operator at Cedar Falls.

Washington, D. C., April 9, 1865 — 9 p. m.

Major-General Dix,
New York:

This Department has just received official report of the surrender, this day, of General Lee and his army to Lieutenant-General Grant, on the terms proposed by General Grant. Details will be given speedily as possible.

Edwin M. Stanton,
Secretary of War.

In Dubuque, where the news was received late Sunday evening, the citizens demonstrated their joy in a midnight celebration. Bells were rung, cannons were fired, and revelers marched. The jubilee continued all day Monday with singing, cheering, salute firing, speeches, and fireworks. "Never before was such a time known in Dubuque". At Waterloo the report of Lee's surrender made the people "about as drunk with joy" as it did in Cedar Falls. A pious deacon seized a friend on the street and shouted, "If you ever dance, dance now!" and around they went in a lively jig. With such expressions of exultation the end of the war was heralded throughout Iowa.

The receipt of the victory message had sent the office force of the *Gazette* into hectic activity. The

editors welcomed the end of the Civil War with hilarity and with a sense of release from strain. They and Cedar Falls would celebrate. George D. Perkins shouted, "Hank, you collect the money. I'll write the extra." Telegram in hand, H. A. Perkins hurried out of the office. All along Main Street his announcement of victory for the North brought an immediate response. Within a half hour he was able to telegraph to Dubuque: "Send by to-day's express fifty dollars' worth of fireworks to Cedar Falls." In addition his pocket bulged with more than twenty-five dollars as a reserve for other expenditures.

In the short interval of his brother's absence, George D. Perkins had dashed off a one-page broadside to serve as the "extra" for the *Gazette*. Excitedly he wrote one headline after another as each flashed through his mind. With a prodigal use of black-face type, exclamation points, and capital letters, Hank composed the eight by fourteen inch handbill and helped his apprentice with the press.

Hour by hour citizens discovered new means for expressing their relief from strain after years of anxiety and deprivation. A group of older boys climbed up to the schoolhouse tower and managed to lower the one-hundred-and-fifty-pound bell to the ground. Commandeering a

VICTORY

Lee and His Whole Army Captured!

OFFICIAL NEWS!

FLING OUT YOUR BANNERS

“Bad Luck to the Man who is Sober
To-night!

Grand Celebration this Afternoon and
Evening!

A Large Quantity of Fire Works Tele-
graphed for to be here to night.

No Business To-day,---Shout and be
Glad,---Glory to God,---Read the News

To J. B. Cavanaugh:

DUBUQUE, April 10th

To Maj. Gen. Dix:

WAR DEPARTMENT, April 9th.

The official report of the surrender
of Gen. Lee and his Army to Gen. Grant on
the terms proposed by Grant is received.

Details will be given as soon as possible.

Signed,

E. M. STANTON.

Glory, Hallelujah! Turn out! Eevrybody and everything
must turn out and celebrate! Speaking, singing, glorifying this after
noon, evening and forever more! Rally at OVERMAN'S HALL!
Eberhart will be there. Guns will be fired and Bells will be rung
Hurrah, Everybody! The year of Jubilee has come!

By Order of Committee.

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THE BROADSIDE EXTRA OF THE CEDAR FALLS GAZETTE

wagon, they mounted the bell upon it and drove about town with the bell's clapper sounding a constant ding-dong. This was "accompanied by the sharper clang of a good-sized dinner bell," and it may well be imagined that little boys took their cue, scooted for home, and presently reappeared to augment the din with sleigh and cow bells.

Laughter and shouts greeted the appearance of an impromptu float displaying Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee in effigy. For this float several young men had appropriated a very heavy and ungainly cart used for hauling logs from the timber on the bluffs north of town to the sawmills. Its huge wheels stood eight feet high. This clumsy vehicle was drawn by a sturdy yoke of oxen. On the tongue sat Old Bunk, the good-natured negro servant of the Overmans, carefully labeled "Contraband". Over the axletree perched a very ragged, dirty-faced urchin who represented the "poor white trash of the South". Behind the cart at the end of a rope dangled in effigy the dapper figure of the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis. Robert E. Lee "also had the hemp about his throat," but was given a place of comparative honor: the figure of the Confederate General hung suspended just out of the mud.

While excitement prevailed along the board walks, Lieutenant Peter Melendy had summoned

the Governor's Guards to the Armory. Along both sides of the muddy Main Street tremendous cheers arose as the guards, accompanied by the bandboys playing a patriotic air, stepped briskly into the street. Hundreds of citizens fell into line as the militia paraded up Main Street to the Commons at Ninth Street. These were joined by others as the Guards faced about to march northward to Overman Hall.

In this hall, the largest auditorium in the city, Zimri Streeter, known in the Iowa General Assembly as "Old Black Hawk", and recently familiarized as Jeremiah Martin in Bess Streeter Aldrich's *Song of Years*, presided over the first victory meeting of the day. Renowned for his dry wit, he humorously called for impromptu speeches commemorating the soldiers of the North, extolling Abraham Lincoln, and praising the local support given to the nation. Some one from the audience called upon A. G. Eberhart, the popular Baptist preacher, to sing "A Thousand Years". Then with the assistance of a male quartet, Eberhart led the community singing of gospel tunes and patriotic airs. Before adjourning for the evening's program of music and speeches, Eberhart requested the audience to rise; then he led them rousinglly in the singing of Old Hundred: "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow".

All through the afternoon, by constant augmentations from the rural districts, the crowds along Main Street thickened. Farmers poured into town upon horseback, in dashing buckboards, or arrived with their families in mud-bespattered farm wagons. By nightfall Cedar Falls, then numbering close to three thousand, beheld the largest crowd it had ever witnessed. At the railroad station just across the Cedar River, a large group awaited the arrival of the evening train in order to escort the fireworks to a crude and hastily erected platform at the corner of Second and Main streets in the vicinity of the booming cannon.

The liberal donations of the morning permitted a display of pin wheels, Roman candles, and sky rockets, previously unsurpassed in the city. As the last rocket zoomed into the air and its colored lights melted against the April sky, the crowd milled one block to the south, awaiting the first flare of the blaze as a huge bonfire was ignited. To the more thoughtful in the group, as the flames of this conflagration illumined the faces of the celebrants, the flames symbolized the purging of the war guilt and the purification of the nation.

The bonfire, however, did not end the Day of Jubilee. A second program of speeches and patriotic music in Overman Hall followed the fireworks and bonfire. Again an enthusiastic audi-

ence applauded the victory speeches of the city pastors, and listened gravely to the plans for reconstruction offered by such Iowa legislators as A. F. Brown and J. B. Powers and Zimri Streeter. Until a late hour, Eberhart on the red carpeted dais led in the singing of such wartime songs as "We Are Tenting To-night on the Old Camp Ground", "O My Darling, Nelly Gray", "Yes, We'll Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys", and "The Star Spangled Banner".

Even before the singing began, couples had been slipping down the two narrow flights of stairs from Overman Hall and had crossed the street to participate in the dance which Host Wilcox of the Carter House was offering free of charge. Old settlers in reminiscent mood used to say that this jubilee dance lasted until dawn on Tuesday. The following Friday, perhaps to allay current rumors, George D. Perkins, in the regular issue of the *Gazette*, made the statement that Wilcox's dance though "free to all" was free from "rowdyish proceedings and improprieties of any character" and had been a thoroughly enjoyable affair.

To mothers with boys at the front, for parents faced with the increasing cost of living, for troubled economists, this day of jubilee was the most joyful the little city had ever known. Four days later George D. Perkins in subdued mood, headed

his leading editorial "The Glorious News", and ended it with these words:

"The Union is not only saved, but regenerated, too. Surely now we may sing,

The land of the free
And the home of the brave!

'Redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled!' the Proud Republic stands to-day before God and Man".

LUELLE M. WRIGHT

Lincoln is Dead!

All day Saturday and Easter Sunday, April 15 and 16, 1865, warm April sun brightened the newly budded oaks and elms in Cedar Falls. In contrast to the brilliant promise of spring, early on Saturday morning the clicking receiver of the telegraph bore vague but foreboding rumors that on Good Friday night President Lincoln and Secretary Seward had been murdered in Washington. These dismaying messages cast a shadow over the hopes for national unity which only the Monday before had flared high with excitement.

Although on that Saturday morning the balmy spring weather and good roads had brought an unusually large number of farmers into town, few people had any heart for business. Farmers disinterestedly deposited their butter and eggs on grocery counters and, without stopping to barter for the usual supply of coffee, candles, and calico, quietly withdrew to join the moody crowds on the board sidewalks. All were trying to down the insistent fear that the reports might prove true. Not until nearly noon was it possible to verify the first rumors. Then the news of Lincoln's assassination was confirmed.

The regular Friday issue of the *Gazette* which had announced the glorious news had scarcely reached its rural patrons when the victory was turned into bitter irony. Grimly the Perkins brothers prepared another extra which boys, only half sensing the calamity, hawked up and down Main Street, crying out, "Lincoln died this morning. Seward is alive."

The extra carried two closely related news items, one national and one local. Except for confirming the death of the President, the broadside could supply only a very few details concerning the assassination at the Ford Theatre. It announced definitely, however, that a union memorial service for the martyred President would be held at three o'clock on Easter Sunday in the Presbyterian Church. For this program a group of citizens hurriedly made the necessary arrangements. Among these no one was more active than George D. Perkins, who had served with the Thirty-first Iowa Infantry and had but recently recovered from a long illness contracted in the swamps of Arkansas.

On that Easter Sunday seventy-five years ago, many pious families in Cedar Falls foreswore their customary and leisurely Sunday dinner. The records show that, in order to prepare the Presbyterian Church for the coming service, they carried

from their shops and homes all the ceremonial accoutrements of mourning that were deemed appropriate emblems of death in the middle years of the nineteenth century. An hour before the service, "the walls, the altar, the pulpit, and the pews bore festoons of black crepe and black muslin." From the walls, pictures of Lincoln, draped with black and surmounted with flags in V-formation looked down upon the audience room. About the communion table and pulpit other flags, "their staffs furled in black, paid tribute to the War President."

By two o'clock men and women began to filter into the quiet church. Members of the choirs of the Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Universalist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches were ushered to seats behind the pulpit. In front of these, the six pastors in ministerial black sat upon straight-backed chairs. Except for the front rows of pews reserved for the Governor's Guards, the church was soon packed to capacity, while outside a silent crowd filled the block from Sixth to Seventh streets. In the preceding four years, the people of Cedar Falls had witnessed too many funerals of soldiers not to feel the finality of death and the implications involved in the loss of the soldier's and the nation's leader.

A part of the service followed the traditions of

a military funeral. Into the silence of the church drifted the sound of muffled martial music and the listeners caught the rhythm of the drum beat and of the soldiers' marching tread as the Governor's Guards passed the church to the open Commons at Ninth Street. There a triple salute of three rounds of ammunition honored the "great departed one". After a subdued command from the officer, the company wheeled north to the church. The silent ones outside noted that a broad band of black crepe encircled the right arm of each Civil War veteran and of each enlisted recruit who had not yet been summoned to the front. Another border of black enshrouded the guard of every gun. From the church door the Governor's Guards, with heads uncovered, moved slowly forward to the seats reserved for them before the pulpit. The company's flag, borne ahead by the standard bearer and placed at the right of the reading desk, was "deeply furled in black habiliments".

The pastor of the Baptist Society, A. G. Eberhart, singer, orator, and evangelist, delivered the memorial address. Beginning in a quiet voice he at first made a controlled effort not to play upon the emotions of his hearers. With deliberation he related the few details which had come over the wires and paid a high tribute to the manhood of the martyred President. He stressed the fact that

the people of the nation had lost a friend. As he progressed, however, he was carried away by the pressing needs of his country. He expressed the conviction of the audience that nothing could be "too severe for the demons of this hellish rebellion or for their apologists and proselytes". In scathing terms he referred to those of the North who would palliate the crime of the assassins. He demanded in the name of heaven that Justice be not sacrificed to Mercy.

As a Christian minister, he tried to reconcile the loss of Abraham Lincoln's guiding power with the Will of Providence. Perhaps unconsciously he repeated in substance the words of Editor Perkins in Saturday morning's extra, "By our faith in Him who doeth all things well we are bound to believe that Abraham Lincoln had finished his appointed work."

The eulogy and benediction over, the flag bearer lifted the furled emblem; the drummer boy touched lightly the muffled drum; and the Governor's Guards, followed by the audience, moved in silence down the central aisle and out into the brilliant April sunlight of Easter Sunday, 1865.

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

A Prairie Editor Comments

On the Thursday evening following Lincoln's assassination, George D. Perkins sat down in his plain sanctum to finish his editorial columns for the weekly issue of the *Gazette*. The week had been an unusually busy one for the soldier-editor, scarcely recovered from a severe fever, the effects of which had incapacitated him for two years. During the fateful days of April, 1865, President Lincoln had been foremost in his thoughts. As, little by little, news dribbled in by telegraph and by exchange newspapers from the East during the week following the tragedy in Washington, the Perkins brothers had daily issued one-page extras. These had duly recorded John Wilkes Booth's dramatic cry of "*Sic semper tyrannis*", had presented the scene at Lincoln's deathbed, and had related details of the pursuit of the assassin.

With unusual care the Perkins brothers planned the make-up of the Lincoln memorial issue of the *Gazette* on April 21, 1865. On the two inner pages, bands of black divided the eight columns of each page. After a careful perusal of all available exchange papers, a two-column report on the

"Particulars of the Assassination of President Lincoln" had been prepared. George D. had also written a detailed report of the local Lincoln commemorative service. Although he failed to mention the fact, he, as much as any one else, deserved credit for the success of the necessarily hurried arrangements.

George D. Perkins knew at first hand the hardships of war — ague, short rations, exhaustion, and the imminency of death. As a citizen, he had admired and honored Lincoln. As an editor, he had supported the President's desire for a strong Union, and now he shared the belief that the death of Lincoln was bound to prove a major calamity for the nation so recently freed from the menace of civil war. And so, reflecting upon the tragedy, he tried to describe the universal grief and anger that the people felt. "No words of mourning can express the unutterable woe of the heart; no words of execration can pronounce the maledictions which rise up against those on whom his pure blood rests. The hellish demon of American Slavery", declared Editor Perkins, "has added the exalted Lincoln to its long catalogue of victims".

As he thought of the awful responsibility and untiring labor of the President, his words of tribute glowed with inspiration and the reverent editorial ended with a prayer. "Standing at the head

of this great Nation in these troublous times, steadily bearing forward the rightful cause of the Republic, he won the admiration of the world and the love of his countrymen. He took to his great heart the widow, the orphan, the humblest of the land, and in stooping from the great and absorbing affairs of state to wipe away the tear of the afflicted, comfort the sorrowful-hearted, and encourage with his genial, trustful words the sorely tried, he became indeed the great father of his people. Alas! that he is dead. He, so nobly good and great in all the attributes of exalted statesmanship and exemplary Christian manhood, 'one of us, yet above us,' has passed away in the very noontide of his refulgent glory! In an hour of popular joy and exultation the great bereavement came, silencing all lips and clouding all hearts. O God of Thy people, the sick heart turns to Thee! He who ever led to Thy great throne, leads yet again, saying: *'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether!'* "

All week three words had found deep lodgment in the mind of George D. Perkins — Lincoln, Justice, Mercy. Sometimes these words seemed ironical but most of the time they invoked profound sadness. During fragmentary moments of leisure he had pondered over the relationship of mercy and justice to the national tragedy. What

could justice mean to a bereft nation? What could mercy mean to rebels and to murderers? Where should justice end and mercy begin?

Sadly he recalled that Abraham Lincoln had persistently advocated a policy of clemency and that he had never harbored "bitterness toward the wicked insurgents"; yet he grimly realized that this magnanimous head of the nation was the martyr of the very subjects of his mercy. Perhaps the death of Lincoln was a timely act of Providence, indicating that clemency was a futile policy. "Already there were many advocates of general amnesty," wrote Perkins, "leaving even the chiefs of the Great Rebellion, dyed red in the blood of thousands of patriots, to escape entirely the condign punishment they so richly merit at the hands of an outraged people. The horrible crime which has startled the Nation, and turned all hearts from joy to mourning, has aroused the righteous indignation of the people, and they cry out as with one voice, 'Let not Mercy overreach Justice.'" Perkins was inclined to endorse the words of President Johnson, "Mercy to individuals is not always mercy to the State." Apparently, he concluded, "We were permitted ample trial of the clemency policy. The rebels but requited kindness with barbarity, pardon with murder."

During the second week after the assassination,

the editor had time to orient his thinking. Still bitter against the conspirators, he attributed the cause of their crime to the leaders of the rebellion. It was "the legitimate result of what the Slave power has taught and practiced for the last thirty years" — the use of "any means to dispatch an opponent". The murder of the President was but the culmination of personal assaults, lynchings, bloody strife in Kansas, and civil war. "For their attempt to dismember the Union; for their thousand deeds of horrid crime, which culminated in the murder of Abraham Lincoln; by the memory of our patriot-dead; by the thought of unnumbered widows and orphans they have made, we demand that a swift and terrible retribution be visited upon the guilty heads of the leaders of the great rebellion." Toward the misguided common people of the South, however, Editor Perkins advocated a "lenient and magnanimous policy". Perhaps in this way he hoped to reconcile justice with mercy.

The columns of the *Cedar Falls Gazette* usually contained a poem or two, often by well-known contemporary writers. Following the death of Lincoln many dirges and poetic eulogies of the President were printed. A representative poem, "The Lost Chief", composed by a minor poet, Charles D. Halpine, contained two stanzas worthy

of insertion, not for their poetic skill but as indicative of Editor Perkins's attitude toward his lost chief. Perhaps he felt the line, "His blood is freedom's eucharist," to be a restatement of his own belief, expressed in one of the *Gazette's* extras, that in some mysterious way the cause of freedom would triumph through the martyrdom of Abraham Lincoln.

He filled the nation's eye and heart,
An honored, loved, familiar name;
So much a brother that his fame
Seemed of our lives a common part.

A martyr to the cause of man,
His blood is freedom's eucharist,
And in the world's great hero-list
His name shall lead the van!

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

Iowa in Mourning

In war regalia Lieutenant Peter Melendy had led the Governor's Guards up and down Main Street of Cedar Falls in the victory parade, and had responded to Zimri Streeter's request for a speech in the victory assembly in Overman Hall. Usually the prime mover in every community enterprise from lyceum debating to raising funds for soldiers' orphans, Peter Melendy was absent from the little city and could not participate in the Lincoln memorial service on Easter afternoon. In order to meet members of the State Fair Board and to complete arrangements for the State Fair to be held at Burlington in September, he had left Cedar Falls on Wednesday, April 12th.

In pre-associated press days the Perkins brothers had fostered the newspaper habit of making press correspondents of all local residents, who sojourned at Pike's Peak, dug gold in Nevada, attended national conventions, or visited the State legislature. Throughout the war they had elicited correspondence from soldiers in hospitals, in camp, or on the march. To such requests no citizen responded more generously than did Peter Melendy. So liberally did he keep the *Gazette*

informed about crops, new railroad activities, political conventions, the proceedings of the State Fair Board, and the progress of the new "farm college" that he earned from the editors of the rival paper at Waterloo the sobriquet of the "literary scribbler for the *Gazette*".

Two days after the Victory Celebration, an all-day ride on the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad brought him to Dubuque where he found the citizens jubilant over the surrender of Lee and his army. The next day by steamboat he traveled down the Mississippi to Davenport whence he boarded a train on the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad for Grinnell. In cities and all along the road he found "rejoicing to be the order of the day". Returning on Saturday, April 15th, he stopped off at Iowa City to arrange for exhibits of stock at the State Fair. There he met N. H. Brainerd and Samuel J. Kirkwood in the post-office. While they were engaged in conversation, an excited person interrupted them to ask what they knew of the rumor concerning the assassination of the President and of Secretary Seward. Their informant knew only that, as the morning train pulled out from Davenport, a message of that nature had been received at the railway station.

The news spread like wildfire through the

streets of Iowa City. Business was disregarded. Since Iowa City then possessed no telegraph office, the often reiterated question, "Can it be?" could not be answered. A courier on horseback was dispatched to Muscatine. Peter Melendy, a hero-worshipper of Abraham Lincoln, found himself too distraught to complete the State Fair arrangements. With a group of gentlemen who could not wait for the return of the messenger, he boarded the east-bound afternoon train and reached Muscatine in the evening, where his worst fears concerning President Lincoln were confirmed. He spent the rest of the week-end with Suel Foster, then Iowa's chief orchardist and one of the foremost advocates of scientific agriculture.

On Easter Sunday morning the weather was sufficiently warm for Melendy to carry his writing materials out upon the veranda of Suel Foster's home. From the high knoll he could look across his host's extensive apple orchards to the wooded hills overlooking the Mississippi. Fully conscious of the contrast between the promise of the warm April day and the devastating gloom settling over the North, he fulfilled his promises as newspaper correspondent by writing to H. A. Perkins: "I arrived in this city last night at 7 P. M., and found the report too true. O, I never can forget the

feelings that I had when I stepped from the cars and looking here and there saw the flags at half mast and the stores and dwellings draped in mourning. . . . The dreadful news was received here about 9 A. M. Saturday, when the stores were closed, a public meeting was called at Tremont Hall, and arrangements made to observe the day. Minute guns were fired until sundown, flags were at half mast, and crepe hung on all the doors."

With Suel Foster that Easter Sunday morning, Melendy attended memorial services in the Congregational Church and heard President George F. Magoun of Grinnell College eulogize Abraham Lincoln. After the noon meal he again stepped out upon the porch to complete the letter he had begun in the forenoon. It seemed to him that the songs of the birds were sad, that the budding trees had paused in their springtime exuberance, that all nature was mourning with the nation. "The waters of the great Mississippi," he wrote, "chant a mournful dirge for the Nation's Pride. The blow is heavy; it fell like a thunderbolt on the hearts of the people."

Peter Melendy's mind reverted to scenes connected with the National Union Convention in Baltimore less than a year before when he had met and talked with Lincoln. "But a few short months ago," he recalled, "I took the great good man by

the hand at the White House, and when I remember the warm reception he gave me, as well as the entire Iowa delegation to the National Convention at Baltimore, the thought would arise, Can it be possible that he is dead? It seems but yesterday that he stood there in all his manliness and great goodness, with high hopes of his country's future. And then again the recollection of that great convention, such an one as was never before held, and the like of which will never be seen again — so harmonious and unanimous for the great man. The scene will never be forgotten."

Furthermore, with thousands of others in all parts of the nation, he felt the ominous menace to the nation's future and the danger that the cause for which the North had fought might yet be lost. He knew that misguided persons could cause havoc without calm and wise leadership. The letter closed with a prayer that was almost an imprecation: "Would to God that the hot wrath of the people might swing every man that rejoices at this calamity."

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

The Closing Scene

To pay a final tribute to Abraham Lincoln, Iowa sent many representative citizens to Chicago on May 1 and 2, 1865. Peter Melendy was chosen to represent the municipality of Cedar Falls. Less than a year before, in company with other delegates from Iowa to the National Union Convention in Baltimore, he had delivered the news of Lincoln's second nomination to the President in the White House.

On this particular memorial occasion, George D. and H. A. Perkins had exacted special correspondence from Melendy for the *Gazette*. They asked for letters which would both describe and interpret the final rites paid to Abraham Lincoln in Chicago. To this request, Melendy responded with two journalistic epistles, one dated May 1st and the other May 2nd. It is doubtful if the editors could have found a better reporter in Cedar Falls to present the solemnities of this memorial event. As long as he lived, Peter Melendy displayed a youthful interest in unusual happenings and at the same time a very profound respect for dignity of form and ceremony.

During the hours that the presidential cortège

remained in Chicago, Melendy did not miss a single detail that it was possible for him to observe. To a generation which has lived through the disillusioning interim between two world wars, the diction in some passages seems fulsome and the emotional tone overstressed. Melendy, however, was writing for *Gazette* patrons, who listened ecstatically to "Curfew shall not Ring Tonight" and who wept with Dickens over the death beds of Little Nell and Paul Dombey.

On May Day, 1865, the funeral train reached Chicago, and for a day and a night the body of "America's noble chieftain" lay in state upon a raised marble catafalque in the rotunda of Chicago's crepe-draped City Hall. Although the funeral train from Indianapolis was not scheduled to arrive until 11 A. M., Melendy reported that every available inch of space on the processional line had been occupied since nine o'clock.

For readers of the *Gazette*, the special correspondent furnished picturesque details. The funeral train, he wrote, consisted of "ten passenger cars, all beautifully draped in mourning — among them the beautiful car built expressly for Mr. Lincoln. This beautiful car had never been used until this time. It was magnificently draped in habiliments of woe". As the train slowed down, the reporter from Iowa noted that the Light Guard

Band played a plaintive dirge and, while the casket was being transferred "to a beautiful catafalque" erected under an exquisite triple arch, the band continued to play softly "the Lincoln Requiem, composed by Vaas".

Just as the cortège neared Lake Michigan the sun broke through dull clouds, and to the artist in Peter Melendy, nourished on romantic nature poetry, inanimate things seemed to be participating in the general mourning. "The placid deep chants the dirge in the low-beating ripple. A strange sadness touches all that behold the beautiful scene — something whispered in silvery tones and seemed to say, 'Passing away! passing away!' The tolling bell, the sad and mournful salute of the minute gun, all tell of the wonderful and sublime occasion."

While the long procession made its slow five-hour way to the City Hall, an estimated forty thousand joined in the parade of mourners. Many of these were citizens of Chicago; some were foreign born; and others had come from Iowa, Wisconsin, and neighboring States. Silent crowds on the sidewalks, in windows, and on roof tops watched the procession pass down the full length of Park Row into Michigan Avenue and up to the City Hall. They "stood reverently with uncovered heads", Melendy reported. "As

the car passed slowly by, all uncovered their heads, and death-like silence prevailed. And as the eye of the watcher caught the simple word in letters of silver on the side and beneath the coffin, of LINCOLN, the tear would start and audible sobs could be heard in any direction. The old and young, stout men, unused to tears, would give way to deep grief."

The whole scene, according to Melendy, defied his powers of description, yet he strove to register his pictorial and emotional impressions for Iowa readers of the *Gazette*. Many details, he claimed, were so deeply etched on his mind as to be unforgettable. As the solemn cortège marched slowly through the streets with steady tread, the melancholy music of the dirge, the tolling bells, the rustling crepe, the boom of the minute gun, the flags at half mast, the festoons of evergreen and roses and black and white muslin draped from every building contributed to the sublimity of the occasion.

Constantly reminded of the time he had been admitted to the presence of Lincoln and had shaken the now inert hand, Peter Melendy determined to wait his turn in the long lines that silently passed Lincoln's bier in the rotunda of the City Hall. As he stood there, many details entered the fringe of his consciousness — the black

velvet and white satin of the canopy's lining, at each corner of the catafalque a great vase of rare flowers emitting exotic perfume, the placing of reflectors so that a mellow radiance was cast on the body beneath the starry roof of the catafalque. He noted a "placid, calm countenance," and that a "life-like appearance rested upon the face of Mr. Lincoln."

More than the trappings of woe, the democracy of the occasion affected Melendy. In a tribute of silent devotion, rich and poor, white and black, grandsire and stripling filed past the bier of Lincoln, "walking side by side, all on the same level. A nation loved him."

At seven-thirty the next evening the coffin was closed and the casket carried to a waiting hearse about which a band of three hundred torch bearers and a chorus, chanting "a solemn farewell dirge", formed a great circle. To the correspondent from Iowa the closing musical number of these obsequies seemed especially fitting, for as the funeral train pulled out of the station, the band played an old coronach, "Farewell! Farewell! noble chieftain, farewell!"

In closing his letter to the *Gazette*, Melendy very simply expressed his own belief and that of the majority of contemporary witnesses. "Probably never did the death of any one man come to

the hearts of so many as a personal bereavement. He had enshrined himself in the confidence of the people, — and their hearts will long be draped in sorrow and gloom because of his death.”

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

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