

NOTE: President Lincoln was mortally wounded by an assassin on April 14 and died April 15. Rhoda describes the public mourning in Cambridge. The false impression that Vice President Andrew Johnson was inebriated when he took the oath of office as President was evidently strong in Cambridge.

"Our Home" April 17th 1865

My dear Milton

Oh! what a dark cloud is hovering over us - how our glad sunshine has so suddenly turned into a deep impenetrable shadow - what a terrible revulsion of feeling! for almost two weeks here [there] had been joy and rejoicing almost to excess[.] Alas! what a fearful awakening from our bright dream [-] a Peace & loved ones restored to us so speedily - Yet I doubt not tis all for the best - but ah! we cannot feel it so now - Hope - with drooping pinions and tearful face [-] is crouching beneath the shadow - yet is pointing upward through the cloud & whispering "Trust in God" - the arm of flesh has fallen - fallen - Our wise, good, honest, noble President is no more - The heart of every true man & woman is sorrowing - Even his party enemies dare not rejoice (openly, at least[.]) Scarcely had the last sound of our great rejoicing died away upon the stillness of the morning - ere upon the wiry messengers - of joy - & of grief - came the words "Abraham Lincoln has fallen by the hand of an Assassin" - like lead it sunk [sic] into our jubilant hearts - how quickly was changed the glad, happy, hopeful faces as the warm congratulation had passed from lip to lip - "Oh the war will soon be over & the boys will be home" [-] Now our men were gathered in little groups here & there on our streets with sad - some with tearful faces - in sympathy - consulting - & foreboding - business houses were closed - doors were draped with the sad emblem of mourning - woman [sic] wandered from house to house among their neighbors - to communicate the sad news & to mingle their tears together - for the nation's loved one who had fallen - & that too by the hand of violence - an insult to his family, to his many friends - to his nation - & to his God -- "On thy heights, O Israel, is the Gazelle slain! How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,

Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised tremble.["]

Writing to you my love the first of last week - I thought the rejoicing was to be Thursday & promised to write to you Friday - but I was wrong in the time - Friday ^[April 13] was the day - after raining almost every day during the week ^[April 14] Friday came so mild - so clear ^[and] so beautiful - the sweet Spring air laden with perfume from the blooming fruit trees - Oh! t'was splendid! if you had only been here, but then I was prouder of you where you are -- & I suppose this my pride brought upon me the never ending hatred of some insignificants - as you will see by the Times the general meeting was in the Court House Yard - when we first gathered there was some scarcity of seats - Ed Bell was fussing about his wife & children ^[,] getting them fixed in a comfortable & conspicuous place - he then got seats for his Mother & Bettie who were standing by us - I turned & said to Mother ["we've no men to help us to a seat["] - Bet turned to me with a silly hateful grin peculiar to the family - & said "Dont you wish you had?" - I smiled drily & replied ["no - I'd rather they were in the army where they ought to be" - the diminutive creature straightened herself & gave me such a look full in my eyes - that almost annihilated me I felt it very sensibly into the very nail of my great toe - was I too blunt my darling? - Mr Hoagland spoke or preached & it was well done - by the way ^[,] Alex McCracken helped us to a seat with Mrs Clark & Mrs Armstrong - when it was over Mrs Brown & the two older girls came up and staid [sic] for supper - so I could'nt write - then in the evening we all went down town to see torch lights - fireworks &c - we came up home about 9 o'clock ^[were] & so tired we went right to bed - You will doubtless see all the particulars in the Times & hear through other letters, Yesterday there was a Union (or united I mean) meeting in the Hall - 505 persons were said to be there, twas sad & solemn - Mr Ellison - & Mrs Forsythe & Mr McConnal - two

UPs addressed us - Mr Forsythe in speaking of Johnson said in bible language ["the heart of the King is in the hand of God &c" - it seemed comforting to think so - and then surely he will have the prayers of all good people - & let us trust they will prevail and that he may be guided to do just what will most conduce to the good and the honor of our now saddened nation. Mother fears he will prove a second Tyler - she cannot trust in a man who took the sacred oath of [top of page 1:] office with the unhallowed lips & loathsome breath of a drunkard - Oh Milton all these things are to humble us, that we may be constrained to trust in God and not in mortal man - The attempt upon the life of our good Secretary was if possible more inhuman and fiendish than the other - God grant that he may yet be spared to us in this our time of need - We need experienced hands & true hearts[.] But I have some good news too, to tell you amidst all our gloom - Mr Milligan yesterday proposed to his congregation to resign his charge - & not one voted against him going - that is as we heard of it - So if Presbytery - which meets next week - grants him a discharge which I am confident it will - I think we may consider ourselves relieved. I don't anticipate that we shall get a pastor for some time, perhaps not until the war is over - but we shall have supplies sent by Presbytery - so we shall certainly have some good preaching part of the time - Mrs Smith said she was told we could get Rev Joseph Grimes - is he the Grimes - with [sic] you were acquainted^[?] - if so, - you would be pleased, wouldn't you? If nothing happens I intend to start to Sunday School next Sabbath - & renew my labors there - & when we get a pastor I will endeavor to attend to my duty as a Presbyterian better than I have been doing - provided we get a Christian pastor - wouldn't it be good for us to have a pew - & all go to church together my love - & lead our little ones steps higher! You don't desire me to be a Methodist? do you darling? - I am such a bigot - it would be a little hard - Ruth said she heard Mr Ellison talking to you while you were sick about uniting with the Church - & she thought you seemed to excuse yourself - by

saying that I was a member of the Presbyterian church - she told me in a kind of reproving way - that I felt a little hurt - but then I thought she must be mistaken - for you had never intimated any such thing to me - and I am sure you have talked more confidentially to me about these things than to Mr Ellison, or anyone - Write me about it love, when you feel like it -

I had two letters from you last Wednesday - one from Blue Springs & one from Bull Gap - such a horrible name ^[for] civilized northern folks to have to say - Meliss has been home on a few days vacation, returned today - Saturday night I had a letter from Cousin Will he was at home & well - he says he enjoys - his liberty seeing his home & friends - but one thing more he wants & that is to be with his Regiment to get some revenge for his treat-treatment [sic] - & have some share in the glory - he had to report to Parole Camp & then if he'd get another furlough - he would come to see us - & go to Mt Vernon - Cousin Kate from Ill^[inois] - is visiting her Mother too -

Mother has been rebuilding the chimney & we moved the stove into the little Kitchen - Tirza is enjoying the fresh air & sunshine - grandly - she was so delighted to go with us Friday - she loves so well to be dressed - Like Pa - Good bye love I must quit this time - Your own loving Rhoda