

1<sup>st</sup> sheet -

(From Miss <sup>Caroline</sup> Weston.) to Miss Collins  
Weymouth, Massachusetts.  
April - 1865

My dear Friend,

I write to day from the midst of a  
national sorrow deeper & more bitter  
than can be told, & which seems more  
intense as the weary days go on & the terrible  
event of last week is more distinctly realized.  
I shall send you by this post some American  
newspapers containing some particulars of  
this last dreadful crime, the completion  
of an iniquity that was already beyond  
precedent. You will have seen already  
the accounts furnished by your newspapers  
but as they are with few exceptions friendly  
to the rebels you may not get clear ideas  
from them of how the event is regarded  
here or what is the real aspect of the true  
feeling of the country under these exciting  
& afflicting circumstances. I was thinking  
of you during the brilliant rejoicing

over our recent victories & the prospect  
of the termination of the war, & intended  
to claim the sympathy I knew you were  
feeling for us while you read of the fall  
of Petersburg & Richmond & the surrender  
of Lee - events which virtually ended the  
Rebellion - for they left the rebels without  
cities or fortresses without generals or armies  
without sea-ports, supplies, or means of  
transport, and best of all without slaves,  
- left all who were weary of the fight to  
go home to their families, & set at liberty  
thousands of prisoners, - not to speak of the  
emancipation of hosts of Union men  
shut up in Southern cities. Joy was  
in all hearts & every where flags were  
flying, - glad bells were ringing, cannon  
roaring, & everywhere was the voice  
of thanks giving to God who had given  
the victory. Then came this last  
overwhelming blow. It is heart-breaking.

Never I think has any man so associated himself with all that is holiest & noblest in a nations life as President Lincoln had done with ours. He was beloved in every home as a personal friend is beloved. Never have we ourselves felt so deep a sorrow except when death was under our own roof. The integrity, elevation, fearlessness & tenderness of his character were widely & deeply felt. No selfish purpose - no low ambition deformed his large & generous nature. I believe God had made & trained him for the great emergency to which he was called, & for which his rare qualities so singularly fitted him. It would seem almost miraculously filled him. He was a man endowed with uncommon wisdom & wonderful equanimity of character, this solemn sense of the vast responsibility of his position was accompanied with a

consciousness of corresponding ability.  
How he had been beloved & trusted,  
his military home, before this public  
services made him known to the  
whole nation you will read. He was  
a great & good man murdered by those  
on whose souls rests all the righteous  
blood spilt since the beginning. For  
this is no chance shot of a mad man  
no private vengeance for fancied wrong  
- it is the last expiring effort of slaveholders  
Barbarism, ignorantly thinking to distract  
& perhaps destroy the country by this blow  
at the Government. No doubt is entertained  
that not only it was intended to murder  
the President & Secretary of State, but Mr  
Stanton & Mr Sumner as well as the Vice  
president & other important men. Happily  
the courage or the opportunities of the other  
ruffians were insufficient. The Telegraph  
caused on that fatal morning of April 15  
a shock to every home in the wide loyal  
United States. There was grief & mourning  
in every house as when a beloved one  
died.

the mourning was deep & universal & spontaneous. — as by common consent dwellings & public buildings were covered with emblems of mourning). the grief of the people everywhere found a religious expression, there was prayer in the dwellings of the citizens in the churches on "change" everywhere where even two or three were gathered together by chance. The people seemed now to bow as one in an agony of prayer & supplication, as they had a few days before united in a joyful Thanksgiving). Every house — even the humblest was in mourning) — the bells tolling & guns firing) through the length & breadth of the land; from every little parish came the sound of lamentation — & the newspapers were unable to give even the smallest notice of the great majority of those that wished to <sup>report</sup> ~~report~~ their proceedings — I hope you will receive the account of the meeting in Faneuil Hall. I think you may rely upon the speeches of

C. G. Loring & Pelly) Chandler - & in  
another place of Judge Russell - as the  
true expression of the state of the public  
mind here) - It was a strange time ~~and~~  
for such a great blow - the whole land  
was full of thanksgiving) that the War was  
virtually) ended - & this thanksgiving), -  
however triumphant might be its feeling)  
in view of a country) redeemed from a  
great sin & a great danger) was singularly)  
free from any sentiment of animosity,  
or revenge on those whose wickedness had  
brought us so dreadful a trial - Everywhere  
the wish to restore the South as speedily  
as possible to quiet & to prosperity) - & to  
deal as generously) as possible) with the  
rebels) was paramount. Even till now  
many were saying) "forgive them who  
knew not what they did." - This spirit of  
forgiveness seemed to have a sudden  
increase as the obvious termination of the war  
opened such a happy) prospect for the  
future) - & many too kind hearts were

grieved & troubled as they thought of the sufferings arising from confiscation & exile. All felt that the reorganisation of society at the South in the new state of things, - with the new element of free labour & freed men & women, presented many difficult problems. - But there was a perfect confidence placed in the president & his cabinet, & all trusted that things would work well. Never shall I forget the ~~hour~~ of the day which brought us the news of the assassination - there was no early train to our village, & a dreadful rumour reached us early (brought by some one, who had seen at a distant station, a passenger by the N. Y. train) "the President had been stabbed, - was in extremis, but not dead," - then another report followed that Mr. Seward had been attacked - we passed two restless hours & then our own train came bringing confirmation - but we passed all the first part of the day in the most painful agitation -

as the telegrams reported - both the  
President & Secretary mortally wounded  
& then at last came the tidings that  
both were dead - the news was happily  
untrue as regarded Mr. Seward, - but for  
two hours we thought both were no  
more! No one could tell what it was - &  
as we felt, so felt all - I saw every  
where men & women in tears - & a gloom  
like that of the grave was in every  
house. In Boston not only all places  
of business & amusement, but all public  
houses & dram shops were shut & the  
city had been hushed these last nights  
like a city of the dead.



With all this grief & mourning came  
 no thought of fear, no doubt of the  
 safety & stability of the government.  
 the strong foundations of a nation  
 resting on so broad a basis can be  
 shaken by no one death, no single  
 man's <sup>loss</sup> however wise & great & good.  
 He will be mourned and missed as  
 never man was - but if the rebels  
 thought that any amount of murder  
 could disturb such a fabric as this  
 they were mistaken indeed. There  
 was no fear, - no panic, - no public  
 function was left unfulfilled at  
 Washington, - financial affairs were  
 unaffected by it, - it had no other  
 effect on the gold market than that  
 the brokers with one consent closed  
 their places of business & it was felt  
 to be no time for speculations. Expressions  
 of sympathy with the Vice President, &c.

suddenly & awfully called into office  
came from all quarters.

I believe there is little doubt of the existence  
of a conspiracy as extensive & profound <sup>as that</sup>  
as that which threatened Mr Lincoln's  
life at the time of his first inauguration.  
This Assassination is the natural fruit of  
Slavery & Rebellion, & tho' proper measures  
of safety were taken yet I suppose men  
living so long in the midst of war did  
not at every instant remember that  
~~(as I do make Major Bingham say of the  
Indians) they had to do with an enemy  
whom the devil himself had inspired so  
once with cunning & cruelty.)~~ ~~What~~  
rewards for the assassination of our  
chief men, Lincoln first fall - have  
been repeatedly inserted in <sup>the</sup> rebel  
newspapers. That men like Lee & Jeff.  
Davis & their associates are capable of  
any crime. These men - Lee, Davis, Benjamin  
Hoyd &c. have seen under their own  
eyes, & by their own orders, thousands &  
thousands of our prisoners, dying in a state

too horrible for description, of cold & hunger  
- devoured by vermin - without water,  
shot down if they dared approach the  
narrow window of their crowded  
prison for a ray of light or a breath  
of air. Multitudes died in prison of  
these horrors. Multitudes, exchanged  
for strong & healthy men, died after  
reaching our camps. many having  
forgotten their <sup>own</sup> names & returning to their  
Comrades in a state of idiocy, soon  
followed by death: - others gained  
strength & by tender & careful treatment  
to reach their own homes & die among  
their kindred. Two such funerals passed  
our door last week. For these things  
is the man whom the London Daily News  
calls a "fine soldier," a "gallant Gentleman"  
&c. a countable. (They (the D. News) express  
their admiration of a rebel who has betrayed  
his country & fired on his flag. What would  
they say of a British officer who had done  
such things?) I regretted that Gen. Grant

This advisers, among them probably  
good Lincoln himself, sh<sup>d</sup> have given  
Lee the terms accorded to an honorable  
sue - for vain is magnanimity &  
generosity when one deals with one  
whose life has been spent in the unre-  
strained indulgence of the basest  
passions. to whom truth & faith &  
honor are unknown. Lee who  
flogged a helpless woman with his  
own hands, Jeff. Davis who has been  
making a fortune by Blockade  
running while his dupes were starving  
& dying of cold & hunger, Benjamin  
who was in his youth a detected thief  
at Yale College - saved from public puni-  
ment only by the generosity of his college  
Class, Floyd the robber of the public purse  
& all the rest - loaded with crime & treason  
are not proper objects of sympathy. If  
however there had been any thought of  
amnesties that sh<sup>d</sup> include the leaders  
& officers of the Rebellion it has I think  
passed away. All these men who do not  
get out of the country will be brought to trial for  
their crime.

Mr Seward's escape is truly wonderful  
 I am astonished that at his age  
 & in his situation he had not yielded  
 to the shock - think of an old man,  
 helpless from the accident of the  
 preceding week, attacked & repeatedly  
 stabbed in the face & neck, & aware of  
 a death struggle going on in his room  
 between his brave servant & the  
 assassin! It seems his presence of  
 mind never deserted him. As soon  
 as the man grappled with the  
 murderer & forced him away, for  
 the moment the secretary did the  
 only thing left for him. He rolled  
 himself from the bed & when they turned  
 to him & thought him dead or dying  
 as he lay in a pool of blood, he roused  
 himself to give the necessary orders.  
 "I am not dead send for the police &  
 a surgeon & close the house." & then  
 he spoke no more for a long time.  
 That Mr Seward's life is spared we

feel to be a special providence,  
for his wisdom, & ability, & devotion  
was never more needed than now.  
'I suppose that danger from these  
desperate representatives of the  
"Confederacy" is still apprehended  
as a guard is placed round Cha-  
Sumner's house . . . . .

The Russians are supposed to be  
connected with the St. Alban's racket  
as Mr Seward was warned by a letter  
from Canada of an attempt, about  
to be made on his & the President's  
life, but in consequence of the <sup>London</sup>  
accident which confined him to his  
bed he could not give the letter the  
attention it deserved. <sup>Some will remember</sup> The Gans

in Canada procured evidence  
from Richmond <sup>(before the capture)</sup> of the Rebel govt and  
authorization of their proceedings, on  
which showing they were discharged, the  
presumption is that this murder had

a similar warrant.

But I have no more time or space. Think of us as troubled but not despairing, - cash down but not destroyed. Our great grief is that Abraham Lincoln could not live to enjoy the safety & prosperity which he has done so much to establish, & the love of a people who understood him & valued him as he deserved. He will be missed in every way, but no doubt or fear darkens the future of the Republic. Never since we were a nation were we so strong as now when all the strength, ability, & virtue in the land, pushed by a natural law in the right direction.

We felt more about the dreadful affair, as the Langel & A. Chapman spent some time at Washington in the winter & received

no end of kindnesses from Mr & Mrs Lincoln  
& the Seaward family.

From Miss Weston

to

Miss Weston

April 25<sup>th</sup> / 65