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Document: *Letter to Mrs. Welsh re: General's death August 16th, 1863*

Transcription:

Burnet House, Cinn.
August 16th, 1863

Dear Madam:

I have never felt more at a loss for fitting words than now, when I address one stricken by such unexpected and overwhelming sorrow as has fallen upon yourself. I would be presumptuous to attempt consolation; but I trust I may be permitted to express the deep sympathy for yourself and family that I truly feel.

As my dear friend was in a measure in my charge during his last hours, I feel that you will desire such particulars as I can give. The first intimation I had of his sickness was the reception of the enclosed telegram from Peart Erwin addressed to his uncle, who was absent from home. This was on Thursday morning. I was uneasy, but judged that if your presence here was necessary Surgeon Christ had telegraphed you. Had I dispatched to you as soon as I received it you could not have arrived before the General's death. I had a carriage at the depot at the designated hour, but found that the General had stopped off (at Odin, I think) to avoid traveling in the heat of the day, and would reach Cincinnati next morning at 10 o'clock. I learned from Capt. Hicks, of the General's staff, that he considered him in no danger, and felt entirely re-assured. As Mr. Lockard was absent, although Mrs. Lockard kindly offered to receive the General, I thought best to engage a room at the Burnet House for him, but from Capt. Hicks I learned that he expected to stay with Mr. Lockard. I informed Peart Erwin of the fact next morning and we were together when the train arrived on Friday morning. I found the General very weak and suffering from the closeness of the sleeping berth. On learning that Mr. Lockard was absent he declined going to his house and desired to be taken to the Gilson House where his staff stopped, but when Peart waded his aunt's offered he accepted. The General was too weak to sit up in the carriage, so I procured an ambulance, in which he was taken to Mr. Lockard's residence where he had an airy, comfortable room. I felt great alarm, though I was but vaguely sensible of the General's state; his attendants not seeming to think him as ill as he really was. I went to the Medical Director and obtained a surgeon but when I returned I found Dr. Goode, a neighboring physician, called in, and using active means to counteract the growing weakness and prostration. His opinion decided me not to telegraph to you. He said that re-action must take place speedily if at all. I feared the worst, and knew that a dispatch stating the General's illness would start you for this place at once. Had he rallied I intended sending for you immediately. I felt oppressed by the case of alone taking measures for the relief of the General, and leaving with him Doctors Goode and Highway went in search of some of the staff and members of the 45th. Mr. Lockard's residence being at the extremity of the city they could not find it readily. On my return with Capt. Hicks I was informed that the General was dying. I did not go into the room at the time but went to Capt. Hicks and was writing a telegram announcing the



danger as a preparation for the sad news that must follow when Mrs. Lockard informed me that it was too late-the General had breathed his last at ten minutes past six. Col. Curtin and two members of the staff were present and Major Kelsey had been with him a short time proceeding. He again arrived with the Medical Director of the Division soon after the General's death. George Derrick and Hinkle were with him on arrival and cared for him during the whole day. He seemed to rely upon George, who did everything that man could do for him, and has doubtless informed you more satisfactorily of the General's state than I can do. I think his case was hopeless before he arrived here, although I did not realize it for some time, in spite of my fears. He knew me, but did not address me by name at any time. And generally looked at me as at a strange face. He suffered from oppression but I think no local pain, and while I was absent all suffering ceased and he died calmly and without a struggle. His disease was a congestive fever, and congestion had made such progress by the time he arrived here that it could not be arrested. Doctor Highway, I learn, is of the highest reputation, so that everything that medical skill could suggest was attempted. I cannot be too thankful that the General was taken to Mr. Lockard's instead of to a hotel. Mrs. Lockard was unceasing in her kindness and attentions and placed her house at our disposal. Both physicians were assiduously attentive and Doctor Highway did not leave the General from the time he was called in until the hour of his death.

I think that the General, although at times conscious of danger, was scarcely clear enough in mind for a calm realization of his extremity. He frequently wandered, but was always clear in his requests for assistance or attention from George Derrick. But George can be more minute and correct than myself.

In ordering preparations for the removal of the General to Columbia I acted to the best of my judgment and effected what was possible in the limited time and I hope all will meet your approval.

I deeply regret that I could not form one of the escort home. I was incessantly engaged up to near midnight in preparations, and consequently prevented from taking steps to obtain leave. I hesitated about going without leave, but feared that I might not be justified in doing so. It would have been a relief to me to continue with, and pay the last hours to my old and true friend.

I trust that I have done right in taking the responsibility of acting on this sad occasion. It has been a most trying duty but I have endeavored to do my best. Lieut. Cross[?], who had charge of the General's funds during his journey handed me his pocket books containing eighteen dollars, which I will account for. The General's valise was at the Gilson House. I have it in charge. I took the liberty of opening it in search of letters which had been received for me at headquarters, and which Derrick told me were in the valise. I did not find them and suppose they are in the trunk. Such of the General's effects as are here I will forward at the earliest opportunity-I think I can do so by some member of the 45th going home on furlough.



I must not forget to mention that Lt. McClure, who only learned the General's death late in the evening, kindly took my place and staid all night, giving his assistance at Mrs. Lockard's.

Lieut. Gelbaugh will confer with you as to the disposition of the General's horses. I beg you to appoint any over here to act for you, without regard to my having assumed to do so thus far.

It is almost mockery to name my loss in the face of your great and irreparable misfortune: but I fully realize that I have parted with one of the truest friends that man ever had. I think no one more entirely appreciated your noble husband than myself; but all his brothers in arms unite in sorrow for his loss to them and his country, and the deepest sympathy with his family.

If I can be of any further service, dear Madam, I beg you command me.

Resp~,

Sam^l Wright.

Scope and Content Note:

Handwritten letter to Annie Welsh from Samuel Wright, Burnet House, Cincinnati, Ohio. Letter recounts the last hours of the life of Thomas Welsh as seen through the eyes of the writer and provides details regarding removal of the body to Columbia and initial efforts to account for his personal belongings.

