

JAMES SPEED,
AND
THOMAS & JOHN SPEED,
ATTORNEYS AT LAW,

511 West Green St.

Louisville, Ky. Sept 16th 1885.

Joseph H. Barrett Esq.
Lowland Ohio

Dear Sir

I own yours of Sept 14th and for
reply would say. I cannot attempt to give in
better words than Mr Dickens, an account of this
Cabinet meeting, although it made an
indelible impression upon my memory -
even after the lapse of so many years the
picture can be recalled to my minds eye
as clearly as though the circumstances occurred
but yesterday, and I fondly cling ^{to} the memory
of Mr Lincoln's personal appearance, and I
saw him that day, with cleanly shaved face -
well brushed clothing and neatly combed hair
& whiskers, in fact the contrast was so great as
to cause each member of the cabinet to remark
it. I well remember that Mr Stanton said to
me as we went down the stairs together. "Didn't
our Chief look grand today."

As to my trip to City Point I remember
the occasion well. Mr Lincoln at the advice
of personal friends, left Washington in

order to get some with his wife and a few
others went with him. Whilst he was at
City Point his wife came to Washington
and addressed me a note requesting me
to return to City Point with her, when I
received the note, being behind in my official
business, I was very loth to go. but I determined
to consult Mr Seward, who occupied a room
in the same building. I well remember that
upon entering Seward's office I found him
lying upon the sofa reading Montaigne's
Essays. after showing him the note I stated
to him that I did not want to go because
of the pressure beforementioned and that I
did not wish to appear in the city of
Richmond which had been so recently taken
by our forces. as such a visit might
signify mere exultation over a fallen foe.
He arose and walked the floor said with
great emphasis "The request of the President's
wife was equivalent to a command, and
I must obey," he said further, he wanted me
to go on another account, the end of our
trouble was fast approaching and the
Southern people would feel as though

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the world had come to an end. Many individuals among them, would be absolutely crazy, that history & human nature taught him, if there were to be assassinations, now was the time. The President being the most marked man on the Federal side was the most liable to attack. He said I was the only man that could warn the President of the danger and insisted upon this with great earnestness making me promise to have such a talk with Mr Lincoln.

The President & party whilst at City Point lived on board of the boat, every day during my stay the President & myself went ashore visiting the soldiers but more particularly the hospitals. All during my visit to him he was so occupied by company that an opportunity to have a private talk with him never presented itself so I was never able to keep the promise made to Mr Seward until left alone with Mr Lincoln in the cabin of boat as we returned to Washington. There was upon the center table a very

fine copy of Shakespeare, he reached the volume and read therefrom several passages. among others "Duncan is in grave" &c I saw my opportunity and commenced telling him what Mr Edward had said he stopped me at once saying, he had rather be dead than to live in continual dread. Any precautions against assassinations would be to him perpetual reminders of danger, expressing at the same time confidence that his only safe guard was the severe penalties which would be visited upon such a criminal would be affecting to any man with an atom of sound sense.

I remember many other minor incidents of the trip but none of sufficient importance to write about.

Very respectfully,

James Speed.

James Speed

Don. James Speed,
Sept 16, 1857