

CSVI.30 D.R. Arnell Esq, Ashwood Tenn.

Nashville June 18 1849

Dear Dave

I send you a bulletin of health as per request. The last week or two will be memorable in the annals of our city. The pestilence has, of a verity, been in our midst, and left the prints of its remorseless footsteps. Fully two hundred deaths have occurred in the last fortnight- nearly half of them during the three last days. On Friday, there were 38 burials, on Saturday 41, and on Sunday about 15. Today the burials will not exceed a dozen, and the new cases are neither very numerous nor very violent. The air seems purer, and we think the pestilence crisis is for the present past. Three fourths of the mortality mentioned has been confined to a narrow strip of the city, lying within and in the sides of the ravine between Broad Street and the college- principally on Summer Street, and the street further back from the river than Summer. The remaining one fourth has come from all parts of the city, sharing a general prevalence of morbidic curse, be it what it may. The graveyard looks like a new ploughed field-the fresh sod being thrown up in all directions. While the remains of ex president Polk- for, alas, he is dead-were being {illegible} to the tomb, I noticed several burials going on simultaneously. And yet, as I remarked in a letter this day written to my father, like a man in a battle after the first fire, I have long since lost all feeling of uneasiness, and experience now neither sickness nor fear. I deem it my duty to remain where my lot in life is cast, and remain I will. I have friends who will attend me in case of sickness, and to where I desire to be of service should occasion require. In your own language, I do not wish to mistrust, nor to tempt Providence- and I conceive I am doing neither by submitting to what may be sent, and [illegible] the event among the people with whom I have chosen to take my lot.

The present is the third visit from the cholera, to which our turn has been subjected during the present year. The first took place early in the month of February, lasted about two weeks, and numbered about thirty five persons among its victims. Gen. Taylor's visit to Nashville was made during the prevalence of the disease at this time, and while it was at its worst. The weather when it first began was hazy and wet, but shortly turned off clear and cold- and I never saw prettier weather in than prevailed when the disease was most fatal. The second visit began about the fifteenth of March and continued two weeks, with the loss of about 30 lives. From this period up to the third visit, scattering cases occurred, in all about 15 cases. About the middle of May the cases began to increase, and by the close of the month the disease might be considered as epidemic. It has gradually increased in violence, until its ravages have been as before stated. The deaths during this last visit cannot be set down as less than 250. At first confined to the lower classes of society and to negroes, it has latterly attacked the better classes of society, and in the infected district above described has shown itself no respecter of person, and has spared neither old nor young, male nor female. Upon the whole, however, the mortality has been greatest among the negroes, next among the laborers, and next, principally during the last visit, among women and children. Strong, healthy males, of the better classes being rarely attacked. Prudence in diet and clothing, and the avoidance of exposure, have generally proved sufficient prophylactics.

Yes, my Brother in political faith, our leader during the last four years, is dead. Seized, about two weeks since, by a violent attack of a disease (diarrhoea) to which in a chronic form, he has been long subject, rendered doubtless more malignant by the prevalence of the epidemic in our midst, he lingered, alternating between life and death, until Friday the 15th instant, when at eighteen minutes before 5 o'clock P.M. he finally sunk to rest. During the continuance of his illness and up to a very few moments previous to dissolution, he retained his consciousness. Aware of his critical situation, and, from an early period of his sickness, satisfied that his {illegible} was drawing to close, he calmly prepared himself for the crisis. I sat up with him several nights, and, among others, the night precursing his death, and I never saw more decided firmness, or more complete resignation. With that strong moral courage for which he was remarkable, he looked to a fatal termination of his disease without fear, and died without a murmur or a struggle.

The City Authority, upon the official announcement of his demise, met at the City Hall, and passed resolutions {illegible} the visitation of Providence which had deprived them of their distinguished townsman tendering to the afflicted family their condolence for the heavy misfortune that had befallen them, and requesting the citizens to close all houses of business or recreation on the next day, being the day of his funeral, as a mark of respect to the deceased.

Accordingly, on Saturday, all the ordinary avocations was suspended, stores and other places of business closed and several houses draped in black. At the special request of the deceased, he was consigned to the tomb by Masons and with Masonic honors. The fraternity went through their ceremonies- both affecting and impressive, at his late residence on Vine Street. The body was then carried to the Methodist Church, and a funeral sermon delivered by the Rev. J.B. McFerrin. The speaker, in that portion of his remarks personal to the deceased, gave a brief sketch of his life and public career, passed a high and deserved eulogium on his moral character and unblemished integrity, and detailed in a forcible and impressive manner, the particulars of his last illness and death. Early in his sickness, Mr. Polk had connected himself with the Methodist Episcopal Church- a church for which, as his friends and intimate acquaintances all know, he has always entertained a preference. The funeral services performed, the body was conveyed to the graveyard, accompanied by the Masons, the City authorities, and a long train of mourning citizens, and deposited in the tomb with Masonic forms after a brief but beautiful and appropriate address by Wilkins Tannehill P.G.M. presiding officer of the fraternity. A benediction by the minister closed the ceremony, and our distinguished fellow citizen was left to his last and long repose.

To the state of Tennessee, the history of James K. Polk is familiar. Early in life, he commenced his career as a public man, and for nearly 30 years he has been prominently before the public eye. Beginning at the foot of the ladder, without any other aid than by his untiring energy, patient industry, and native talent, he climbed step by step until he reached the summit; and then, after having filled every grade with distinguished honor, and ability as if his work were done, sunk to rest, alas, not full of years but full of honor. Mr. Polk was born on the 7 Nov. 1795 and, of course, had not quite completed his fifty fourth year at the time of his death. But in this brief period of little over half a century, what mighty events have been compressed. When born, the struggles of infantine democracy were convulsing the [illegible] of the old world and promising an early and vigorous manhood. At his death, the young giant is again aroused, let us hope strangers and heathens share of {illegible}. In his own country, he has seen the young Republic measure surely on equal terms with the greatest of nations, and crush a mere ignoble for almost without an effort. He has seen the population which, at his birth, had just begun to ascend the

eastern side of the Alleghanis, spread over the mighty valley, rise that loftier range where summits are lost in perpetual snow and descend its western slope to the surf-line of the greatest of oceans. He has seen our territory more than doubled and our boundaries definitively settled. And of the most important of the events during the last quarter of a century, he was a part. Whatever may be an opinion of the policy of his acts, in his different public capacity, we must concede their importance, and admit the ability with which they were conceived, and the energy with which they were communicated. If success as seems universally allowed, be the test of capacity and the "true touchstone of decent"- Then was he eminently capable, and eminently deserving. He sleeps with the great and good who have gone before him. May the earth be lightly over his remains.

"Dii majorum dumbrus, tenuem et sine pondere terram, Spirantesque crocos et in una perpetuam ver."

Our Historical Society has gone fully into operation. N. Cross, Prest. A.W. Putnam, Vice Prest. Jno N. Eakin, Corresponding Secretary. W.F. Cooper Rec. Sec. At our first regular meeting on the first Tuesday in this months, two or three excellent articles were read. Every thing promises success.

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Truly Yours, W.F. Cooper

Note_ Instead of copying that portion of the original letter relating to the death of James K. Polk, I have copied an article prepared by myself, and published in the Nashville Union of June 18, 1849. The second paragraph where the cholera at Nashville, was not a part of the letter or sent. It was added here for the sake of future reference. The weather during the second visit of the disease was fine_ clear through cool. During the third visit, it has been cloudy, wet and chilly, until about a week ago, since which time, it has been clean, warm, and dry, in fact, what farmers would call, a bountiful season. Friday and Saturday were particularly fine days.