



Transcript of Séance at White House Article

Seance at White House.

To persons inclined to be incredulous as to occult and psychic matters, it has always seemed strange that so practical a life as that of Abraham Lincoln should be in any wise interwoven with such things as dreams, premonitions and spiritualism. But more than abundant evidence remains to show that from the beginning Lincoln was surrounded by the weird and the uncanny.

Perhaps the extraordinary national struggle which he so thoroughly typified during his later years was partially responsible for this. For students of history and psychology have long since shown the peculiar susceptibilities of individuals and peoples alike to phenomena of a psychic nature, at times of great tension. The slavery issue was already hovering like a shadow over the nation when Lincoln was born. It had more or less to do as the Biographer Binne shows so aptly in the continued meanderings of Lincoln's father. It surrounded Lincoln as he grew up to manhood, and it finally so worked its way into his nature that it needed but the repeal of the Missouri compromise act to make him the inevitable national spokesman.

Therefore, when it is recalled that personal sorrow and personal struggle overshadowed his own life, it is hardly to be wondered at that both he and his relationship to his country should be invested with things strange and unnatural. Perhaps some day when there has been a sufficient lapse of time, some new Shakespeare will arise to preach upon this aspect of Lincoln as the Shakespeare of England treated of similar aspects in the lives of Caesar, Hamlet, and other characters of his history.

A writer from Washington, under date of April 23, 1863, says: A few evenings since Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States, was induced to give a spiritual soirée in the crimson room at the White House to test the wonderful alleged supernatural power of Mr. Charles E. Shockle. It was my good fortune, as a friend of the medium, to be present, the

party consisting of the president, Mrs. Lincoln, Mr. Welles, Mr. Stanton, Mr. L. of New York, and Mr. F. of Philadelphia. We took our seats in the circle about 8 o'clock, but the president was called away shortly after the manifestations commenced, and the spirits, which apparently had assembled to convince him of their power, gave visible tokens of their displeasure at the president's absence by pinching Mr. Stanton's ears and twitching Mr. Welles' beard. He soon returned, but it was some time before harmony was restored, for the mishap to the secretaries caused such bursts of laughter that the influence was unpropitious. For some half hour the demonstrations were of a physical character — tables were moved and the picture of Henry Clay which hangs on the wall was swayed more than a foot, and two candelabras, presented by the dey of Algiers to President Adams, were twice raised nearly to the ceiling.

It was nearly 9 o'clock before Shockle was fully under spiritual influence, and so powerful were the subsequent manifestations that twice during the evening restoratives were applied, for he was much weakened, and though I took no notes, I shall endeavor to give you a faithful account as possible of what took place.

Loud rappings about 9 o'clock were heard directly beneath the president's feet, and Mr. Shockle stated that an Indian desired to communicate.

Hear from Gen. Knox.

"Well, sir," said the president. "I should be happy to hear what his Indian majesty has to say. We have recently had a visitation from our red brethren, and it was the only delegation, black, white, or blue, which did not volunteer some advice about the conduct of the war."

The medium then called for pen and paper, and they were laid upon the table in sight of all. A handkerchief was then taken from Mr. Stanton and the materials were carefully concealed from sight. In less space of time than it has required for me to write this knocks were heard and the paper was uncovered. To the surprise of all present, it read as follows:

"Haste makes waste, but delay causes vexation. Give vitality by energy. Use every means to subdue. Proclamations are useless; make a bold front and fight the enemy: leave trailers at home to be cared for by loyal men. Less note of preparation, less parade and policy talk and more action. "

"Henry Knox."

That is not Indian talk, Mr. Shockle," said the president. " Who is Henry Knox?"

I suggested to the medium to ask who Henry Knox was and before the words were from my lips, the medium spoke in a strange voice:

"The first secretary of war."

"O, yes; Gen. Knox," said the president, who, turning to the secretary, said: " Stanton that message is for you; It is from your predecessor."

Mr. Stanion made no reply.

"I should like to ask Gen. Knox," said the president, "if it is within the scope of his ability to tell us when this rebellion will be put down. "

In the same manner as before the message was received:

" Washington, Lafayette, Franklin, Wilberforce, Napoleon, and myself have held frequent consultations on this point. There is something which our spiritual eyes cannot detect which appears well formed. Evil has come at times by removal of men from high positions, and there are those in retirement whose abilities should be made useful to hasten the end. Napoleon says, concentrate your forces upon one point; Lafayette thinks that the rebellion will die of exhaustion; Franklin sees the end approaching, as the south must give up for want of mechanical ability to compete against northern mechanics. Wilberforce sees hope only in a negro army. Knox. "

" Well," exclaimed the president, "opinions differ among the saints as among the sinners. They don't seem to understand running the machines among the celestial any better than we do. Their talk and advice sound much like the talk of my cabinet— don't you think so, Mr. Welles?"

"Well, I don't know-I will think the matter over and see what conclusion to arrive at."

Heavy raps were heard, and the alphabet was called for, when "That's what's the matter" was spelled out. There was a shout of laughter, and Mr. Welles stroked his beard.

"That means, Mr. Welles," said the president, "That you are apt to be long winded, and think the nearest way home is the longest way round, Short cuts in war times. I wish the spirits could tell us how to catch the Alabama."

The lights, which had been partially lowered, almost instantaneously became so dim that I could not see sufficiently to distinguish the features of anyone in the room, and on the large mirror over the mantelpiece, there appeared the most beautiful though superhuman picture ever beheld. It represented a sea view, the Alabama with all steam up flying from the pursuit of another larger steamer. Two merchantmen in the distance were seen, partly destroyed by fire. The picture changed, and the Alabama was seen at anchor under the shadow of an English fort, from which an English flag was waving. The Alabama was floating idly, not a soul on board, and no signs of life visible about her. The picture vanished, and in letters of purple appeared: "The English people demanded this of England's aristocracy."

Message About the Alabama

"So England is to seize the Alabama finally?" said the president "It may be possible; but, Mr. Welles, don't let one gunboat or monitor less be built."

The spirits called for the alphabet, and again "That's what's the matter" was spelt out.

"I see, I see," said the president. "Mother England thinks that whale sauce for the goose may be sauce for the gander. I may be tic tac, too, hereafter. But it is not complementary to our navy, anyhow."

"We've done our best, Mr. President," said Mr. Welles. "I'm maturing a plan which, when perfected, I think, if it works well, will be a perfect trap for the Alabama."

"Well, Mr. Shockle," remarked the president, "I have seen strange things and heard odd remarks, but nothing which convinces me, except the pictures, that there is anything heavenly about this."