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[**Note by Psypioneer editor:**—In October 2009 Psypioneer published **NETTIE COLBURN MAYNARD** (Part One).¹ Below is published Part Two. It should be noted that Dr Walter Franklin Prince spells the name of one of the central characters of the story, the medium J.B. Conklin, *incorrectly* as ‘Conkling.’]

Dr. Walter Franklin Prince Versus Simon P. Kase



(Copyrighted.)
COL. S. P. KASE AT 65 YEARS OF AGE.

PART TWO:—

Considering the worldwide attention that has been given to “*Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?*” by Nettie Colburn and to earlier accounts by Simon Kase, there is little ready information as to what actually happened and if the scattered reports are authentic.

There is to my knowledge only one investigation into the accounts where the information is collated—by the prominent American psychical researcher, Dr Walter Franklin Prince (1863-1934),² but this has remained rather obscure. Prince’s research was published by the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in their Journal (JSPR) December 1930,³ then a private publication unlike its Proceedings. We express our thanks to the SPR for supplying Psypioneer with a photocopy which we re-publish below. (There were also some comments on this by Leslie Price in Psypioneer—“Abraham Lincoln, Spiritualism and Emancipation”, August 2004.⁴) Ed.

¹ See Volume 5, No.9 pages 341-347:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.10.October09..pdf>

² Prince born in Detroit, Maine April 22nd 1863. He became director of research and editor of publications, 1920-1925c to the American Society for Psychical Research, (ASPR, founded in 1885 by William Barrett). He was one of the founders and research officer to the Boston Society for Psychic Research (BSPR founded 1925) and later become president of the Society for Psychical Research, London 1930-31.

³ JSPR Volume 26, 1930 pages 148-157

⁴ Psypioneer Volume. 1. No. 4, pages 25-27: - http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP4.pdf

THE AETIOLOGY OF A “PSYCHICAL” LEGEND

BY DR WALTER FRANKLIN PRINCE

FOR half a century a certain story, in one or another form, relating to Abraham Lincoln, has been in circulation, and I do not remember to have seen in print any refutation. At last it has come to pass that a book entitled *The History of Spiritualism*⁵ boldly affirms:

“We may fitly end this short review of the early days in America by an event where spirit intervention proved to be of importance in the world’s history. This was the instance of the inspired messages which determined the action of Abraham Lincoln at the supreme moment of the Civil War. The facts are beyond dispute.....” And it has come to pass that a magazine purporting to be devoted to research⁶ declares: “There is a remarkable story extant in regard to the influence which led Lincoln to conceive the idea of emancipation and to act upon it by the issue of his famous proclamation. It seems authentic and if so, it deserves to be widely known.” When a legend has reached the point that it is sponsored by what to many readers are authorities, when it then attracts editorial attention from the Boston *Herald*, and revives in *Spiritualist*⁷ and other periodicals, it is time to confront it with an array of historical facts, and of interest to trace it to its origins.

The learned writer of the magazine article says that “the credit for the preservation of this story is due to Mrs M. E. Williams,”⁸ and after grateful acknowledgment that “our thanks are due to this lady for her kind permission to reproduce the story,” proceeds to reproduce it as embodied in a pamphlet by Mrs Williams, and, she declares, told by Colonel S. P. Kase⁹ of Philadelphia to

⁵ By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1926) i. 146.

⁶ *Psychic Research* (New York, March 1930), xxiv. 115.

⁷ E.g., *Light* (London, 26 April 1930), 1. 199.

⁸ Mrs Williams, the author of the pamphlet referred to (*Abraham Lincoln Facts Indisputable*, 4th ed.), was invited by prominent French Spiritualists, in 1894, to give sittings for the materialization of spirits in Paris, and planned a tour over Europe, which was suddenly terminated by her exposure in that city, in the *Ironic of a Spiritualist*, by Spiritualists, including M. Leymarie, of the *Revue Spirite*. She was “grabbed” and found in the pantaloons and other garments appropriate to a male spirit, and the mask and drapery which stood for another spirit, and other apparatus, were discovered. The whole matter was published in a special supplement to *Light* (1894, xiv. 545-52; cp. xiv. 566-9), and was extensively printed in American journals. I may instance the New York *Sun* of 23 November 1894, which published cuts from photographs of the paraphernalia. The lady has since had a variegated career. Within the last decade a clergyman and his wife, acting under my instructions, twice caught her impersonating a spirit.

⁹ “Col. Kase was a very prominent Spiritualist of the more credulous type. I have an abundance of material showing that he was deceived by some of the most notorious tricksters of his time. His reports of what took place in his presence were so far from the facts that I would not trust his memory or judgment for anything he said on the subject of Lincoln and mediums, because I would expect that any interest which the President showed in the way of trying out mediums would be exaggerated and warped out of semblance to the reality. The fact that Col. Kase was “fully assured in his own

her, and set down at her request so that it should not be lost to posterity. This version, in honour of Mrs Williams, who is thus credited with its salvation from oblivion, we will call the W-version.

According to the W-version, then, Col. Kase obeyed a voice which told him, as he was walking on a street in Washington, to enter the house of a medium named Conkling, who at once engaged him to carry a letter written by himself (Conkling) to the President. Conkling, however, accompanied Kase, but remained in an adjoining room while the latter, equally a stranger to Lincoln, presented the letter which stated that its writer had been sent “by spiritual influences to confer with you regarding the interests of the nation.” Lincoln consented to see Conkling and did so the following Sunday. Four weeks later Kase was present one evening in a certain house, together with President and Mrs Lincoln and other persons, when a young girl advanced toward Lincoln with closed eyes and said: “Sir, you were called to the position you occupy for a very great purpose. The world is universally in bondage. It must be physically set free, so that it may mentally rise to its proper status. There is a spiritual Congress supervising the affairs of this nation as well as a congress at Washington. This republic will lead the van of republics throughout the world.” This is as Col. Kase remembered it at this telling, and he added: “This was a text on which she lectured the President for a full hour and a half, dwelling strongly on the importance of the emancipation of the slaves; saying that the war could not end unless slavery were abolished.” He also thought he remembered hearing “the child” predict that the North would undergo no military reverses after the issue of the proposed proclamation. Then “the little girl” woke, and a lady began to play the piano.¹⁰ Finally, according to Kase, Lincoln, a few weeks afterward, issued the proclamation, to take effect on 1 January 1863, and Kase was quite certain that he was caused to do so by the message through “the child.”¹¹

But it happens that the world does not owe such a debt of gratitude to Mrs Williams, after all. Many years ago, at a time when that lady’s illustrious career was not far advanced, Col. Kase told the story to Mrs Emma Hardinge Britten, who embalmed it in her *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (1884, pp. 484-7) published in 1884. This we will call the B-version. Moreover, as Mrs Britten informs us, the tale had been told by him still earlier, and printed in a Spiritualist paper called the *Spiritual Scientist*, and the B-version includes extracts from that organ.

There are many discrepancies between the two versions.¹² According to B “the President looked somewhat disappointed,” and it is explained that the name sent in, S. P. Kase, gave Lincoln the

mind” that Lincoln was influenced by messages through a medium to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, weighs little in view of the cases of fakery of whose genuineness he was also fully assured.

¹⁰ At this point the magazine omits the only sentences of the Colonel which make the piano interesting; his statement that one side of it hopped four inches above the floor, in time to the music, and continued to do so with four men roosting upon it.

¹¹ It may also be noted that according to Mrs Williams’s pamphlet Mrs Maynard was for two years, 1863-1865, “engaged exclusively by President Lincoln, and made her home in the White House where she gave the President seances almost daily.” This is a fearful perversion of the facts, as measured by the statements of Mrs Maynard herself, who claims to have given “a number of seances with President Lincoln and his wife” in February and March 1864, and mentions only seven other meetings with him, several of which were casual only.

¹² One queer item of Kase’s story may be noted in passing. He reported that he advised the President to write a letter to Conkling making an appointment with him, although all the while that gentleman was sitting in an adjoining room. To

impression that S. P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, had called. According to W, the President was “apparently a little frightened,” and it is explained that Kase much resembled George Washington (to meet whom, in 1862, one would naturally be a bit startled). In each version Kase purports to give a copy of the letter; the two are not verbally identical, although essentially so.

The versions of the trance address verbally differ more widely, although the trend of thought is similar. This is shown by the first sentences of B: “You, sir, as President of the Republic, are called to the position you occupy for a very important purpose. The world is not only groaning under the weight of mental and spiritual bondage, but four millions, made in God’s image, are enduring physical slavery. Their yokes must be broken, the fetters must be severed,” etc. And by a sentence farther on: “This civil war will never cease; the shout of victory will never ring through the North, will never reverberate along the valleys of the South; the olive-branch of peace will never wave over your fields, and lakes, and mountains, till you issue a proclamation of freedom—a proclamation that shall set forever free the enslaved millions of your distracted country.” The effect of all this eloquence, says Col. Kase, “was that President Lincoln was convinced as to the course he should pursue; the command coming from the all-seeing angel world was not to be overlooked, so like a faithful servant, when convinced of his duty, he feared not to do it and to proclaim freedom by the Emancipation Proclamation to four millions of slaves. That Proclamation was issued on September 22, 1862, to take effect the first day of January, 1862.”[Should read 1863]

I have no objection to any proof the “all-seeing angel world” may give as to the validity of its messages, but should lose something of my respect for Lincoln if he accepted a mere mediumistic harangue as proof. Still, if this is history, we must accept it. Fortunately the good Colonel said something else, which enables us to estimate his reliability as a historian.

In the version told to Mrs Williams, he added: “I believe we had twenty-six battles after this great event [the preliminary proclamation of 22 September], and all were successful on the Union side except possibly one or two unimportant skirmishes.” This affirmation seemingly applies to the remainder of the war, and is an egregiously mistaken one. Of major defeats which the North afterward underwent there may be cited the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Chickamauga, Cold Harbor, Petersburg. Grant fought battle after battle with Lee in the Wilderness campaign, which battles certainly were not victories. Among minor defeats may be listed the battles of Drury’s Bluff, Olustee, Sabine Crossroads, Pleasant Hill, Pine Mountain, Kenesaw Mountain, New Market. If the Colonel was capable of such contradiction of public records of his own day, how could one rest content on his uncorroborated story of an unrecorded mediumistic speech which took place years before the telling?

In the B-version, we find the Colonel saying that it was, not through the rest of the war, but “in the intermediate time” between the two proclamations that there occurred twenty-six battles, and now he says that “every one of them was a success upon the Union side.” By the time of the W-version his formula had somehow got twisted, but the earlier one was only a shade less false. For between 22 September 1862 and 1 January 1863, came the terrible Union defeat of Fredericksburg, the defeat of Sherman at Vicksburg, the failure of Rosecrans at Stone River, the

those who remember how accessible Lincoln was it is incomprehensible that, having become interested in Conkling, he did not call him in then and there.

stalemate of even the iron-willed Grant, and on the very day of the final proclamation the rebels broke the blockade of Galveston. Instead of being a period of victory it was one of special gloom for the North.

Considering that Kase was able to imagine and allege a military Utopia which never existed, that he apparently recorded not a line of the trance address and only vaguely attempted to fix its date as “some three or four weeks” before the preliminary proclamation, that he told his story years after the proclamations and the war and Lincoln’s death had passed into history, and that the sentences attributed to the medium cannot be verbally correct or they would not so markedly differ in the two versions, even if I knew no more, I should say that without impugning Col. Kase’s honesty in the least, I could only infer from his yarns that the medium probably said *something* about freeing the slaves, about the war and about the country.

But I do know something more, as does every person familiar with American history, and that is, that on 22 July 1862, Abraham Lincoln read to his Cabinet the draft of a preliminary proclamation of emancipation, fully a month before, according to Kase, he listened to the trance-address from “the all-seeing angel world” which (still according to Kase) first convinced him that such a proclamation should be made. The only reason it was not actually issued that month was because it was thought best to defer it until after a Union victory. When Lee had been checked in the battle of Antietam, 16-17 September, it was determined that a fit time had come. This explodes the legend thoroughly.

But there is more to learn. In the B-version we find that the medium was Nettie Maynard (really, at that time, Nettie Colburn). And she, as it happens, thirty-nine years ago wrote a book entitled *Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?* (Philadelphia 1891). Mrs Nettie Colburn Maynard included in this book her version of what happened on the same evening with Lincoln which Kase had in mind, and of the trance-address. She had every motive not to minimize the facts.

The first particular which strikes our attention is that the medium, whom Kase remembered as “a little girl,” (he calls her this thrice, and says that she reminded him of the scriptural passage about “babes and sucklings”) in 1862, was, according to her own testimony, “a mere child” in 1845, and that she began to engage in public lecturing in 1856. That is, she was probably not less than 22 years old, and very likely older, when she delivered the celebrated trance oration.”¹³

The next fact which we discover from her testimony is that the trance address, the first time she ever saw President Lincoln, was not some time in August, as Kase remembered it (although even that date was fatal to the claim that she inspired the preliminary proclamation), but sometime in December 1862.¹⁴ But the preliminary proclamation had been issued more than two

¹³ Mrs Maynard also told of the terpsichorean piano but stated that its saltations occurred before her oration, not after it as according to Col. Kase.

¹⁴ A little chronology will be useful, to show the slow evolution of the idea of emancipation in Lincoln's mind. Lincoln from the beginning of the war favoured compensated emancipation. He brought about a joint resolution of Congress to pay for the slaves of any state not in rebellion, and signed it 10 April 1862. 16 April he signed an act abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. . 12 July 1862 he met a delegation from the border States and urged that these accept compensated emancipation.

months before, and this had declared that on 1 January 1863, all slaves in States then continuing rebellious would be legally free. The absurdity of claiming that Nettie brought about the act already *in esse*, or the one already *in posse*, needs no accentuation.

But Nettie herself does not make the claim, or anything like it. She admits that she knew that the final Proclamation was at hand. This is her entire account of the address, the parts she thought most important italicised as she italicised them. Beginning with the statement that no one but Lincoln seemed to understand her “until that portion was reached that related to the forthcoming Emancipation Proclamation,” she goes on thus: “He was charged with the utmost solemnity and force of manner not to abate the terms of its issue, and not to delay its enforcement as a law beyond the opening of the year; and he was assured that it was to be the *crowning event of his administration and his life*, and that while he was being counselled by strong parties to defer the enforcement of it, hoping to supplant it by other measures and to delay action, *he must in no wise heed such counsel, but stand firm to his convictions and fearlessly perform the work and fulfil the mission for which he had been raised up by an overruling Providence.*”¹⁵

Here is not a word about the world being universally in bondage, or about the impossibility of the war ending unless slavery should be abolished, or about victories which would result, or any of the hifalutin contained in Kase’s two versions. She first saw Lincoln more than two months after the preliminary proclamation and within a few weeks (nobody gives exact dates) of the final one, which was already absolutely determined upon, and which nothing short of the surrender of the

13 July he told Secretary Welles that after much thought he had about come to the conclusion that it was a military necessity to proclaim freedom to all the slaves.

17 July he approved an act freeing slaves under certain military conditions.

21 July he read to the Cabinet a draft of a proclamation of emancipation to become effective on 1 January 1863, but it was judged best to postpone it until after a Union victory.

6 August he signed an act freeing all slaves employed in rebel military service.

13 September he made a long reply, which has been preserved, to a committee from Chicago religious bodies urging him to issue a proclamation of emancipation. In it he gave no hint of his intentions.

22 September he issued the preliminary proclamation, following the battle of Antietam, giving notice that on 1 January 1863, all persons held slaves in territory then in rebellion should be free.

1 December he again urged his plan of gradual compensated emancipation. This producing no results, on 1 January 1863 he issued the final Emancipation Proclamation.

¹⁵ Since Mrs Maynard turned from the temptation of endorsing Kase’s claim that she inspired Lincoln to emancipate the slaves and told so tame a story of what occurred, her honesty is beyond question. However, one is not compelled to accept her inference that since Lincoln glanced at Webster’s portrait on the wall he implied a conviction that the “Defender of the Constitution” had been addressing him, nor that her memory of the conversation which ensued was verbally exact. I do not believe that an intelligent official asked the President if pressure had been brought to bear upon him to “defer the enforcement of the Proclamation.” That word *enforcement* echoes the medium’s naive assumption that the President could give the impending Proclamation immediate effect in the actual liberation of the slaves in rebellious States. Consequently it is unlikely that Lincoln replied: “It is taking all my nerve and strength to withstand *such* [my italics] a pressure,” though he may well have said that there was opposition to his plan. And did not the medium know that? His message of 1 December to Congress had been printed in the newspapers, and that had said that “among the friends of the Union there is great diversity of sentiment and of policy in regard to slavery and the African race amongst us. Some would perpetuate slavery; some would abolish it suddenly and without compensation; some would abolish it gradually and with compensation,” etc. The public knowledge of these utterances deprives the trance-orator of its last scrap of significance.

States in rebellion or the death of Lincoln could prevent. All that the medium did, according to her own account, was to exhort the President to do what he had announced he would do, to tell him this would be a very important thing, which he knew already, to entreat him to be true to his convictions, which was his life-long habit, and to direct him not to delay the enforcement of the Proclamation beyond the first of the year, whereas it was absurd to suppose that he could *enforce* it before the downfall of the Rebellion.¹⁶

Kase says that the lecture was “so grand and sublime” that the “little girl must have been under deep control of the spirit of some ancient philosopher.” Mrs Maynard hints that this “ancient philosopher” was Daniel Webster!

I do not believe that Kase was a conscious liar, but that he was a very badly mixed up old gentleman. To remember a young woman hardly less, and very likely more than 22 years old, one who began to deliver public lectures six years before, as a “little girl,” a “child,” is alone sufficient to show that his memory was in a mussy condition. The date he assigns to the trance-address is inconsistent with the claim that it brought about the document already existent in writing. His varying but equally untrue affirmations regarding victories show how unreliable he was. And the statement of the medium herself utterly refutes his story, except for the commonplace facts that Nettie was there and harangued the President about his proclamations concerning which everyone then had knowledge.

Incidentally a pretty story told by the medium Conkling to Mrs Britten must go into the ash-barrel too. Roused probably by the interest taken in Kase’s dreamy memories imparted to the *Spiritual Scientist*, one of which was that Conkling spent four Sundays with Lincoln, this medium told Mrs Britten that his spirits “spelled out, letter by letter, the preliminary draft of that famous document. The result of these interviews was the President’s proposition to his Cabinet to issue such a proclamation.” Alas! Kase informs us that these four Sundays immediately preceded the occasion when Nettie first met the President, and she tells us that she first met him in December. But the preliminary draft had been read to the Cabinet in July, and, substantially unaltered, had been issued in September!

The stages in the evolution of the legend, then; were somewhat as follows:

1. Nettie Colburn, in December 1862, when all the country was on tiptoe awaiting the final Emancipation Proclamation, had the opportunity to display her mediumistic oratory before President Lincoln. Stimulated by the stirring events happening and about to happen, she, in what purported to be a trance state, made a very ordinary address, telling him that the freeing of four millions of slaves would be the greatest act of his life, and exhorting him to stick to his announced purposes against all opposition—as any country parson might have preached to him.

¹⁶ *Nineteenth Century Miracles* was regarded as a Spiritualist masterpiece; it was in print seven years before Mrs Maynard printed her book, and it is impossible that she was not familiar with the Kase story. Her account of what really happened must be regarded as a conscious and deliberate contradiction of the tale credited by the *Spiritual Scientist* and by Mrs Britten. She did not expressly denounce that tale, probably out of respect for “the female St Paul of the movement” (See Doyle’s *History of Spiritualism*, i. 138), whose book had given it wide circulation.

2. During the years that followed, Colonel Kase, so credulous that he was the delight of tricksters, and so befuddled that the last three months of 1862 appeared to him a period of uninterrupted Union triumph, really remembering that Nettie had told the President something about a proclamation freeing the slaves, and that she had appeared to him to be very eloquent, gradually and unconsciously concocted for her, in his mind, an unstable speech, and developed the conviction that it first suggested to Lincoln the idea of issuing a proclamation of emancipation, guileless of the fact that the date he assigned to the interview by itself defeated the claim.

3. After the incident had become thoroughly transformed in the laboratory of the Colonel's mind, its importance impressed him to the point of telling it in the *Spiritual Scientist*.

4. The tale attracting wide attention among Spiritualists, the medium Conkling became dissatisfied with the minor part assigned to him therein, and gave out the story that his controls dictated, "letter by letter," the preliminary proclamation, although again dates refute the claim and, were it true, it would completely annul Kase's allegation that the President was indebted to Nettie for the idea. Kase, although so familiarly associated with Conkling, was evidently ignorant of this feature.¹⁷

5. "The narrative in substance was given to the author," that is to Mrs Britten, by Col. Kase himself, but as she passes on, for the most part, the *Spiritual Scientist* version, she probably made no written record of the tale he told her, consequently we do not know what variations it contained.

6. Mrs Nettie Colburn Maynard, the heroine of the Kase tale, demolished it in a book of her own, but it already had too much impetus to be thus stopped.

7. Kase told the story with many verbal and a few factual variations to Mrs Williams who, not being addicted to research, supposed that she was the discoverer of it, and printed it anew.

8. Ignoring the medium's own repudiation of the claim that she influenced President Lincoln to declare emancipation, and neglecting its historical chronology not difficult of access, a professed history insists that Nettie Colburn "determined the action of Abraham Lincoln at the supreme moment of the Civil War," and that "the facts are beyond dispute,"¹⁸ a professed researcher is impressed that the story "seems authentic," a newspaper which professes nothing but a desire to impart news thinks the claim worth editorial attention, the legend starts again on its world-wide travels, and the indignant ghost of Mrs Maynard protests in vain.

¹⁷ The two stories, (1) that Nettie Colburn inspired the preliminary Proclamation, and, (2) that Conkling dictated it verbally rest, each upon the testimony of one person alone. But the cynical Muse who presides over the growth of legends has perpetuated the one which long ago was repudiated by its heroine, and allowed to lapse into "innocuous desuetude" the other, which has never been refuted until the present writing.

¹⁸ Doyle bases his certainty, strange to say, not upon the Kase story, but that of Mrs Maynard, which does not in a single sentence, or by any inference that Sherlock Holmes himself could draw from it, support the notion that Lincoln was influenced in the least by any medium on earth to emancipate the slaves.

Paul Gaunt responds: So what are we to make of Dr. Walter Prince's conclusions and deductions regarding the Simon P. Kase Story?

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On the surface Prince has given a detailed, well researched perspective on the entire story—but was he governed by his own personal opinion of Simon Kase? <sup>19</sup> In reality, Kase was only the story teller; Dr. Prince throughout his research has put all the discrepancies, contradictions and historical incorrectness entirely on the shoulders of Kase who had come to Washington on a business trip! It is surprising that Prince makes no allowances that the various publishers of his story might have added their own interpretation, or exaggerated, or perhaps wrongly formatted Kase's experience!

Prince in comparing the W and B version comments on Kase's "reliability as a historian" but Simon Kase was only relating his experience; he was a business man, not a historian.

We could counter Dr. Prince's remark about Kase's "reliability as a historian," he states in note 16 for example: —

Nineteenth Century Miracles was regarded as a Spiritualist masterpiece; it was in print seven years before Mrs Maynard printed her book, and it is impossible that she was not familiar with the Kase story. Her account of what really happened must be regarded as a conscious and deliberate contradiction of the tale credited by the Spiritual Scientist and by Mrs Britten. She did not expressly denounce that tale, probably out of respect for "the female St Paul of the movement"

Nettie Maynard states in her Author's Preface: - <sup>20</sup>

Some years ago, at the request of that scholarly writer, the late Prof. S. B. Brittan, I prepared a manuscript, which he offered to edit for publication, but his death following shortly, the MS. was lost and never recovered. The present one has been prepared at intervals during the past three years by the aid of an amanuensis.

Samuel Byron Brittan died July 1883. If the date<sup>21</sup> of Brittan's death is correct. Nettie Maynard's *original* manuscript would have pre-dated the above referenced published account in *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, which is an important consideration given Dr. Prince's remarks.

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<sup>19</sup> Prince gives Simon P. Kase very little credibility in his relating of his story, we note, he regards Kase thus—"Col. Kase was a very prominent Spiritualist of the more credulous type"—"His reports of what took place in his presence were so far from the facts that I would not trust his memory or judgment for anything he said on the subject of Lincoln and mediums, because I would expect that any interest which the President showed in the way of trying out mediums would be exaggerated and warped out of semblance to the reality"—"I do not believe that Kase was a conscious liar, but that he was a very badly mixed up old gentleman", etc.

<sup>20</sup> *Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?* Rufus C. Hartranft, Philadelphia 1891 pages 3-4.

**At this point, I will focus only on the role of the medium J. B. Conklin: -<sup>22</sup>**

On continuously reading the Prince report, it appeared to me, that there are probably two stories here that have become confused and mixed up and are being presented as one event; or the dates used by Prince are erroneous. We have seen this all too clearly in the Fox story,<sup>23</sup> how *facts and dates* become interchanged, exaggerated, and distorted.

As we note in the Prince paper, there is contradiction of the *facts* brought forward by S.P. Kase and which Prince presents these in the two versions—W and B (Williams & Britten). Dr. Prince tends to put his narrative into a time frame to emphasize his point e.g., to show contradictions in the Kase story.

Dr. Prince firstly claimed that “the preservation of this story is due to Mrs M. E. Williams...” We come against the problem of not knowing the actual date of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Mrs Williams’ pamphlet—*Abraham Lincoln Facts Indisputable*. Prince references the 4<sup>th</sup> edition but does not give a date. However, the first teller of the Kase story is of dubious character.<sup>24</sup> This version of the story he calls “W-version”:

Below are Dr. Prince’s points of reference regarding the medium Conklin.

Dr. Prince’s “W—version”:

...Col. Kase obeyed a voice which told him, as he was walking on a street in Washington, to enter the house of a medium named Conkling, who at once engaged him to carry a letter written by himself (Conkling) to the President. Conkling, however, accompanied Kase, but remained in an adjoining room while the latter, equally a stranger to Lincoln, presented the letter which stated that its writer had been sent “by spiritual influences to confer with you regarding the interests of the nation.” Lincoln consented to see Conkling and did so the following Sunday.

Dr. Prince’s “B—version”:

Col. Kase told the story to Mrs Emma Hardinge Britten, who embalmed it in her *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (1884, pp. 484-7) published in 1884. This we will call the B-version. Moreover, as Mrs Britten informs us, the tale had been told by him still

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<sup>21</sup> Taken from:—*The Other Side of Salvation* – (page 73), by John S. Buescher, Skinner House, Books, Boston. 2004.

<sup>22</sup> This is the correct spelling for the medium J. B. Conklin, as previously pointed out. Dr. Price incorrectly spells his name as Conkling. It should be noted that the quotes in the B Version, of the *Spiritual Scientist* also spell his name incorrectly as Conkling.

<sup>23</sup> *Fox News*, Volume. 5. No. 9:— <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.9September09..pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Dariex, X. (1894). Le fragrant délit de la célèbre Mrs Williams. [The flagrant misdeed of the famous Mrs Williams]. *Annales des sciences psychiques*, 4, 333-354.— <http://www.pflyceum.org/83.html>

earlier, and printed in a Spiritualist paper called the *Spiritual Scientist*, and the B-version includes extracts from that organ.

In referring again to Conklin, Prince states only:—

In each version Kase purports to give a copy of the letter; the two are not verbally identical, although essentially so.

In the B-version, we find also: -

Incidentally a pretty story told by the medium Conkling to Mrs Britten must go into the ash-barrel too. Roused probably by the interest taken in Kase's dreamy memories imparted to the *Spiritual Scientist*, one of which was that Conkling spent four Sundays with Lincoln, this medium told Mrs Britten that his spirits "spelled out, letter by letter, the preliminary draft of that famous document. The result of these interviews was the President's proposition to his Cabinet to issue such a proclamation." Alas! Kase informs us that these four Sundays immediately preceded the occasion when Nettie first met the President, and she tells us that she first met him in December. But the preliminary draft had been read to the Cabinet in July, and, substantially unaltered, had been issued in September!

This gives us a time line on Dr. Prince's research—Kase, gave his experiences to Mr. E. Gerry Brown, editor of an American weekly Journal *The Spiritual Scientist*, published in Boston, and founded in 1874.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Brown would have published the Kase article some time between, 1874 and 1878, making this the earliest known version at the time of the Prince investigation. Next was Emma Hardinge Britten, 1884,<sup>26</sup> followed by Mrs. Williams. It may seem with the little information Prince provides, that he probably did not in fact see the *Spiritual Scientist* article and relies solely on Mrs. Britten's narrative.

The final reference to the medium Conklin is to be found in his conclusion:—

The stages in the evolution of the legend, then; were somewhat as follows:

4. The tale attracting wide attention among Spiritualists, the medium Conkling became dissatisfied with the minor part assigned to him therein, and gave out the story that his controls dictated, "letter by letter," the preliminary proclamation, although again dates refute the claim and, were it true, it would completely annul Kase's allegation that the President was indebted to Nettie for the idea. Kase, although so familiarly associated with Conkling, was evidently ignorant of this feature.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "A weekly journal of spiritual science, literature, art, and inspiration" Editor: E. Gerry Brown, 1874-1878. See: - <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/191227818>

<sup>26</sup> *Nineteenth Century Miracles* 1884, pp. 484-7. English edition William Britten 1883

<sup>27</sup> Note by Dr. Prince: - The two stories, (1) that Nettie Colburn inspired the preliminary Proclamation, and, (2) that Conklin dictated it verbally rest, each upon the testimony of one person alone. But the cynical Muse who presides

Little is generally recorded about Conklin; incidentally he was the first medium that Emma Hardinge sat with in 1855. The first niggling thought I had when reading the Prince paper was that Conklin lived in New York,<sup>28</sup> not Washington. Presumably Conklin was working away from home or just renting a room for what ever reason in Washington, which happened to be the same room that Kase had occupied in 1850?

Looking further a field we find that Conklin did have other reported dealings with Abraham Lincoln, however this was before the alleged meeting in Washington as recorded by Kase. Dr. Prince makes no mention of relevant material that would have been available to him.

Below are some references regarding Conklin and Lincoln: —

In Emma Hardinge Britten's statement<sup>29</sup> dated Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1869 given before London Dialectical Society, she refers to a Conklin séance in Washington which she claims Lincoln was present: —<sup>30</sup>

Any strong emotion, Mrs. Hardinge considered, was also detrimental to the exercise of spiritual power. Mr. Conklin, of whom she had previously spoken, was invited to attend a number of séances at Washington with some five or six gentlemen, who were evidently desirous not to be known. The manifestations were very marked and decisive, until Mr. Conklin discovered that one of the gentlemen present was no other than President Lincoln; when his anxiety and surprise became so great as entirely to stop the manifestations, which were not again renewed till a mutual explanation had restored him to his normal state of mind. Thus, it would seem, that any very strong emotion had also the effect of rendering the magnetism positive, and neutralising the action of the spirits.

Later, in *Modern American Spiritualism*,<sup>31</sup> Hardinge gives another account of Conklin—Lincoln:

—  
Immediately after the election of the late lamented President Lincoln,<sup>32</sup> an article appeared in the Cleveland *Plaindealer* which the timid feared, and the antagonistic

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over the growth of legends has perpetuated the one which long ago was repudiated by its heroine, and allowed to lapse into "innocuous desuetude" the other, which has never been refuted until the present writing.

<sup>28</sup> I have taken this assumption because every reference from the early 1850s until his death in 1870c all refers to him as residing at New York with his wife and children.

<sup>29</sup> Given verbally

<sup>30</sup> Taken (edited) from: *-Report on Spiritualism, of the committee of the London Dialectical Society*, J. Burns edition, 1873 pages 111-112

<sup>31</sup> *Modern American Spiritualism* published by the Author, New York 1870 pages 301-302.

<sup>32</sup> Abraham Lincoln (February 12, 1809 – April 15, 1865) was the 16th President of the United States, serving from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865.

hoped, would greatly prejudice the cause of the popular Republican leader, by associating his name with Spiritualism.

In the expectation that he would give a public denial to what some interested parties were pleased to consider “a most injurious statement,” the article in question was submitted to the President, who quietly glanced over it, and in answer to the earnest request that he would furnish a contradiction to the papers, replied: “The only falsehood in the statement is that the half of it has not been told. This article does not begin to tell the wonderful things I have witnessed.” The anti-spiritual friends of President Lincoln were henceforth silent on such subjects; but rumor was less obliging and constantly circulated reports of the *séances* in which the noble and greatly harassed martyr communed with the spirits of wise and perfected men, through whose prescient power and far-seeing judgment, counsels were poured into his ear, which bore mighty and fateful fruit. A gentleman lately resident in Washington and only known by his most intimate friends as a strong physical medium, became familiarly acquainted with the contents of many an eventful state paper before it ever saw official light—aye, even whilst it was being issued from the spiritual press over the telegraphic wires which run between the mortal and immortal worlds. Doubtless the human “wire-pullers,” who surround the seats of office and plant their batteries of influence so as to make the nation’s welfare bear primarily on their own, imagine they have exerted an immense power in the great ultimates of national destiny, but they little deem that there are also invisible machinists at work inclosing themselves no less than the country in a network of hidden causes, whose woof is spun by the hands of mightier statesmen than earth, and rulers whose viewless batteries of power galvanize even the very stones beneath men's feet into preachers of their resistless purposes.

The paragraph in the Cleveland *Plaindealer* above referred to, is as follows:

#### “THE PRESIDENT ELECT A SPIRITUALIST”

“It so happened that Conklin, the test medium from New York, was in Cleveland on the day when President Lincoln arrived on his way to Washington. Being a Republican himself, and not wishing to run an opposition to the distinguished visitant, he broke up his own levees at the Johnson to attend that of President Lincoln at the Weddell. The moment he set eyes on Mr. Lincoln, he recognized in him a very peculiar individual who had formerly been a frequent visitor at his room in New York, but whose name he had never been made acquainted with. He used to come alone, sit silently, question mentally, and depart as he came, unnoticed. On one occasion he got a remarkable test, which was published in the *Spiritualist* at the time, in New York. On referring to a file of that paper, Mr. Conklin furnished us with the narrative, which ran as follows:

## “ ‘A GOOD TEST

“ ‘A gentleman who has often visited Mr. Conklin, called upon him on the evening of March 23, for the usual purpose of communicating with his spirit friends.

“ ‘After asking some twenty or more mental questions, which he briefly stated were answered correctly, he put the following, question: ‘Can you inform me of Mr. K.’s condition?’

The answer, written through Conklin’s hand, was: ‘Yes; he is present now.’

Q. When did he die? A. Yesterday morning; he is happy, but cannot communicate. The gentleman departed from his generally taciturn conduct to say this was a very remarkable case, for the friend he had inquired for and whom that communication stated to be present, he had left three days previously in Wisconsin, twelve hundred miles distant, alive, and though indisposed, pronounced by his physician to be fast recovering from a long illness. At Mr. Conklin’s solicitation he promised to inform him if the communication should prove correct. In accordance with his word, the stranger did call on Conklin the next morning and informed him that he had just received a telegraphic dispatch from a brother-in-law of Mr. K.’s, announcing his death on the previous morning, and at the hour stated by the spirit. Mr. Conklin says that Mr. Lincoln is the identical gentleman referred to in the *Spiritualist*; that he remembers him from the peculiarity of his appearance, from his frequent calls, and as the recipient of this particular test.’ ”

The evidence that Conklin had some early involvement with Lincoln is open to more research.

We know that on one occasion Conklin certainly sent President Lincoln a written communication from the spirit of one of Lincoln’s friends Edward D. Baker.<sup>33</sup>

These two letters are a part of eight letters sent to President Lincoln, from J. B. Conklin: Note that they are recorded as I. B. Conklin, rather than the correct initials J. B.

The enclosed communication  
was given through the  
Medium J. B. Conklin  
599 Broadway N.Y. This  
P.M. with a request that  
it be forwarded to his  
Excellency A. Lincoln.  
New York Dec 28/61

13574

<sup>33</sup> See: - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_Dickinson\\_Baker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Dickinson_Baker)

**Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois.<sup>34</sup>**

From I. B. Conklin to Abraham Lincoln, December 28, 1861.

The enclosed communication was given through the medium I. B. Conklin 599 Broadway N. Y. this P. M. with a request that it be forwarded to his Excellency A. Lincoln.

New York Dec 28/61

“My friend will you please have this conveyed to his excellency the President.

My esteemed and best earthly friend.

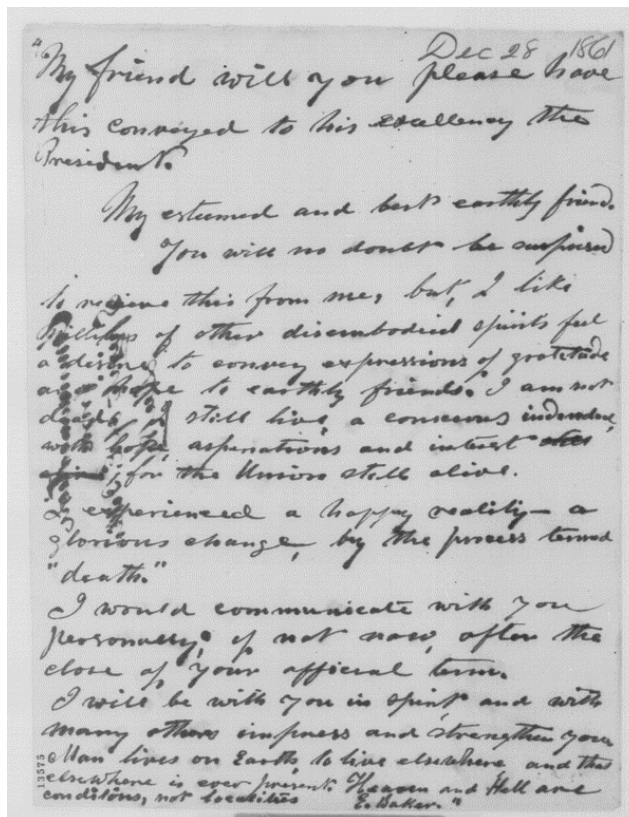
You will no doubt be surprised to receive this from me, but, I like millions of other disembodied spirits feel a desire to convey expressions of gratitude and hope to earthly friends. I am not dead. I still live, a conscious individual, with hope, aspirations and interest; for the Union still alive.

I experienced a happy reality—a glorious change, by the process termed “death.”

I would communicate with you personally, if not now, after the close of your official term.

I will be with you in spirit, and with many others impress and strengthen you. Man lives on Earth, to live elsewhere, and that elsewhere is ever present. Heaven and Hell are conditions, not localities

E. Baker.”<sup>35</sup>



<sup>34</sup> Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress: — <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/malquery.html> use key word conklin. I have had problems with this website when pasting the link if problems occur Google: — Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. There are numerous letters by Robert Dale Owen. Keyword spiritualism brings up for example Judge John W. Edmonds. Another early letter sent to Lincoln by J. S. Hastings, Saturday, September 7, 1861 (Spiritual communications with John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and others) this however has no transcription.

<sup>35</sup> Note by Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress: —Lincoln’s friend Edward D. Baker had been killed in the battle of Ball’s Bluff on October 21, 1861.



## In Conclusion at the present time: -

1) Conklin's letter content and later meeting/s, etc:—

**W version:** —“by spiritual influences to confer with you regarding the interests of the nation.” The President met Conklin the following Sunday—Conklin was not mentioned again.

**B version:**—“I have been sent from the city of New York by Spiritual influence pertaining to the interest of the nation. I can't return until I see you. Appoint the time. Yours, etc., “ ‘(Signed) J. B. CONKLIN.’ ” Re meeting: — “President Lincoln seemed very much interested and said: ‘Tell Mr. Conklin that I will see him on Sunday, between 9 and 10 a.m.’ ‘Oh, no,’ was my reply; ‘write him a letter.’ This is the last we hear of Conklin—“we returned to our respective lodgings.” (E.H. Britten)

Also in the B Version we have the *Spiritual Scientist* bold claim:—“For four succeeding Sundays Mr. Conkling was a guest at the Presidential mansion.”

The editor (1874-1878) of the *Spiritual Scientist* E. Gerry Brown, continues:—“Mr. Conkling has himself alleged to the author, that the Spirits not only urged the subject of the emancipation proclamation, but that they, in the name of the Independence Fathers, spelled out, *letter by letter*, the preliminary draft of that famous document.”

As at present we do not know what date this article was published, not having read the original text by Brown it is difficult to comment, except to say that Brown must have obtained this *alleged* story from Conklin some years prior to the *Spiritual Scientist* as J.B. Conklin died 1870c.<sup>36</sup> In the B Version E.H. Britten dates the Kase visit as 1862, but no indication of the month, the *Spiritual Scientist* quoted in her narrative is not dated by the editor.

2) When President Lincoln read the letter given to him by Kase, did he immediately consent to see Conklin, because he already knew the medium J. B. Conklin? Because, he had attended séances: —“*who [Lincoln] had formerly been a frequent visitor at his room in New York...*” as reported by Cleveland *Plaindealer*. The report certainly if correct, furnished the President with excellent evidence of Conklin's ability.

There is also Emma Hardinge Britten's report to the London Dialectical Society:—“*The manifestations were very marked and decisive, until Mr. Conklin discovered that one of the gentlemen present was no other than President Lincoln...*”

3) Marc Demarest's Emma Hardinge Britten website [www.ehbritten.org](http://www.ehbritten.org) is planning to digitalise the *Spiritual Scientist*. This may give us a fuller account of their report, which was quoted by EHB (B Version). Periodicals (founded and edited by EHB) already available are, *Western Star*, *The Unseen Universe* and *The Two Worlds* see: — <http://ehbritten.org/bibliography.html>

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<sup>36</sup> An undated obituary appears in *The Year-Book of Spiritualism for 1871* by / edited, Hudson Tuttle and J.M. Peebles William White and Company, Boston and James Burns London, 1871 page 221. The book it appears was completed by October 1870 from its various contributors, then published in 1871

4) It may be that the medium Conklin does not *fully* belong in the Kase narrative in the dates presented by Dr. Prince!

5) Dr. Prince places much of his conclusions on the date (in general) that Kase, Nettie and Conklin came into contact with President Lincoln, he states this was August / December 1862, but on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1862—*Abraham Lincoln read to his Cabinet the draft of a preliminary proclamation of emancipation.*

6) Dr. Prince had consulted two maybe three accounts of Simon Kase's story, as given by Williams, Britten and the *Spiritual Scientist*. There is little information as to the correct dating of all these associated events. As I have already mentioned Nettie's MS was lost,<sup>37</sup> so while on her death bed she had to now dictate the entire book, at this point she was unable to write. , this was over a three year period. In her Authors Preface page 1, she states:—*There may be some inaccuracy in dates, as the more prominent events occurred many years ago; but the circumstances as stated are correctly recorded.* It should be noted that Nettie Maynard does not mention the medium Conklin in her book, and only briefly Kase as being present. It is mentioned in the Publisher's Preface pages XVI, and only mentioned once by Colburn on page 90 (first edition).

7) Prince himself has made a number of date errors in his paper, one error is to record the proclamation date incorrectly in one part of his paper. Some of his dates referring to Kase etc., he does not reference, so one wonders to its origin; as the whole story depends on correct dating! Dr. Price appears not to have furthered his research and had accepted that the few references he had to hand finalised the story. The arrival of Simon Kase, the Conklin letter, and the young entranced medium, who spoke to the President all depend on the dates that they allegedly took place! If reference could be found that all this allegedly took place a year earlier, this would certainly add a new perspective to the entire Simon Kase story.

Paul J. Gaunt

To be continued.....

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<sup>37</sup> This would mean, if correct the original manuscript would pre-date Williams and Britten account.

[**Note by Psypioneer editor:**—Little is known of the life of Emma Hardinge Britten’s sister Mrs. Margaret Wilkinson, except for scattered references, and that she edited and published her sister’s autobiography.<sup>38</sup> This was published around June 1<sup>st</sup> 1900, just some eight months after Emma’s death on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1899.

Her obituary published below,<sup>39</sup> reveals more than what is generally known about her early life and connections with the Spiritualist movement in America. (Photograph <sup>40</sup>)]

## In Memoriam

### MRS. MARGARET WILKINSON, MANCHESTER

AS INTIMATED last week, there passed to spirit-life on the 25th ulto.<sup>41</sup> Mrs. Margaret Wilkinson, the only surviving sister of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten. The interment of the physical casket took place at the Harpurhey Cemetery, Manchester, on Wednesday of last week, the body being placed in the grave occupied by her husband, her mother (Mrs. Floyd), her sister (Mrs. Britten) and her husband (Dr. Britten). A party of relatives and friends, including Mr. A. W. Orr, assembled at the late residence of the departed one, when a brief and affecting service was conducted by Mr. J. J. Morse, who had been a personal friend of the family since 1869. The same gentleman conducted the committal service at the graveside, at which a considerable concourse of friends and others was present.



Mrs. Wilkinson was born in Bristol, but came to Manchester when only four years of age, and was brought up by a maternal aunt; thus she was almost a citizeness of Manchester. In early life she was associated with the Unitarian body, and for some years was an active worker in the school of that denomination in Lower Mosley-street in this city. She accompanied the scholars to Peel Park upon the occasion of the visit of Queen Victoria and the Duke of Wellington. At one time she was a member of the Cross-street Chapel, being well acquainted with the Rev. Wm.

<sup>38</sup> *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten*, published by John Heywood 1900. This article is a result of a research visit to The Arthur Findlay College, Stansted Hall (SNU), in January 2010. Bookings, information on courses etc.—<http://www.arthurfindlaycollege.org/>

<sup>39</sup> *The Two Worlds* November 8, 1912 page 559.

<sup>40</sup> The family grave as it was in October 2005: — See *Psypioneer* Volume 1, No.18. *Grave News up Date* by Malcolm A Lewis, pages 219-220:— <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/18.PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Note the error! Grave stone states she died October 24<sup>th</sup> 1912—Whereas the obituary states she died October 25<sup>th</sup> 1912?

Glaskell and his talented wife, also with many prominent families whose names in most instances are only memories to-day. She was married in Manchester in 1857 to Mr. G. R. Wilkinson, and later both accompanied Mrs. Britten-then Mrs. Hardinge-to New York, where she first became acquainted with Spiritualism. While in America she met the Fox sisters, J. V. Mansfield, Ada Foye, the Koons brothers, C. H. Foster, and others of the noted mediums of the early days; also Luther Colby (Editor of *The Banner of Light*), Epes Sargent, Dr. J. R. Newton (the remarkable spiritual healer), and scores of other eminent workers of former days. Her active business career was closed by her appointment as Foreign Librarian at the Library in St. Ann-street, under the Manchester Corporation. Mrs. Wilkinson's last illness was only of eight days' duration, and was not attended with any physical suffering. She was an ardent Spiritualist, always indefatigable in her exertions towards any bazaar or other undertaking for the interest of the Cause for which her aid was desired. Her departure severs another link in the chain of the early pioneer workers, as by her transition the family of Mrs. Britten becomes mortally extinct. Thus our old workers pass from view, but the memory of their good deeds and faithful services will never be forgotten.

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## **PSYPIONEER SUBSCRIBER HAS RARE JOURNALS AND BOOK FOR SALE**

1<sup>st</sup> Edition:—Margery the Medium, by Malcolm J. Bird. Small, Maynard and Company, Boston. 1925 Hardcover, the book has been autographed by Margery.

William T. Stead's—Borderland and Quarterly Review these dated from July 1893—October 1897 and resulted in four bound volumes: For sale are bound volumes: —1-2-4.

In addition there are around 2,500 books on various Fortean subjects.

These are based in the U.S.A.; anyone interested in these rare titles, as well as some digital photographs, please contact:—Raymond Nelke at [coudi51@mindspring.com](mailto:coudi51@mindspring.com)

Please note that any sale/purchase of these items will be a direct agreement between the seller and buyer which does not involve Psypioneer. Ed.

[**Note by Psypioneer editor:**—James Leigh was the pen name for James Cumberbirch,<sup>42</sup> who authored numerous books, editor of Prediction, one time assistant editor of *The Two Worlds*. Leigh was one of the first to undertake a detailed report into the alleged powers of the materialising medium Victoria Helen Duncan.<sup>43</sup> The investigation took place on the invitation of the Manchester Central Spiritualist Church on Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup> 1932.

The first sitting took place the following night, and was conducted under the supervision of Ernest W. Oaten. Leigh was approached to attend the séances in the capacity of official reporter and there were a total seven séances concluding on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1932. He published his positive, detailed reports in the pages of *The Two Worlds* between—May 6<sup>th</sup> 1932 and May 27<sup>th</sup> 1932.

Later, Leigh conducted the first ever interview with Mrs. Duncan’s control “Albert,”<sup>44</sup> although generally this would not be considered Psypioneer material the report however, holds significant interest. This is taken from the front page of *The Two Worlds* Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup> 1932<sup>45</sup>]

# DRAMATIC INTERVIEW WITH MATERIALISED SPIRIT FORM

“ALBERT” TALKS ABOUT HIS  
WORK AND HIS LIFE

BY JAMES LEIGH



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<sup>42</sup> [http://www.publicdomainworks.net/person/PCqBeiNUS42fAngEWEqh3Q/James\\_Cumberbirch](http://www.publicdomainworks.net/person/PCqBeiNUS42fAngEWEqh3Q/James_Cumberbirch)

<sup>43</sup> Helen Duncan has been well represented in the pages of the Psypioneer Journal, use Psypioneer search engine—  
Key word Helen Duncan: —[www.woodlandway.org](http://www.woodlandway.org)

<sup>44</sup> Listen to an early Duncan séance with Albert speaking, also containing Ernest Oaten’s historic B.B.C. speech “*What I believe*”. See—*Listen to a piece of history: - Mrs Miller’s Gift CD*. Written and produced by Gerald O’Hara B.Sc. Psypioneer Volume 5, No.4 pages 106-107. (See Books for Sale at the end of each issue):—  
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09..pdf>

<sup>45</sup> T.W No. 2,340—Vol. XLV pages 625 (front)—627. This article is a result of a research visit to The Arthur Findlay College, Stansted Hall (SNU), in January 2010. Bookings, information on courses etc:—  
<http://www.arthurfindlaycollege.org/>

**The Photograph:**—is an impressionist sketch of “ALBERT” by Dolores Smith. Asked for his views concerning it, “Albert” said: “It is not very flattering. My hair is not quite so bad at the back! But there is a likeness, and I dare say you could recognise me from it.”

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As this is the first interview “for publication” ever given by “Albert,” the distinguished control of Mrs. Helen Duncan, some importance may attach to—it and it will probably serve a useful purpose to outline, briefly, the unusual circumstances attending its delivery.

The experiences of more than a dozen materialisation séances with Mrs. Duncan had impressed me with the fact that an interview with “Albert,” the lending personality in those demonstrations, would be not only desirable from the point of view of a general interest, but might probably be productive of some important information. Accordingly I mentioned the matter casually, and in the course of conversation, to Mrs. Duncan. She, quite as casually, replied that she was “willing to do anything.” The matter dropped then: until five days afterwards at the close of one of her seances at Manchester, when I mentioned to a group of sitters engaged in conversation with Mrs. Duncan that, with her permission, I should like to conduct an experiment in slate-writing. Under an adjacent card-table I placed a slate and crayon, and taking Mrs. Duncan's right hand, placed it under the slate, so that the latter was supported against the under-surface of the table. The left hand and arm of the medium lay on the upper surface of the table. Mrs. Duncan was apparently under the impression that I was seeking enlightenment on some personal difficulty, for she remarked, “I am tired to-night. Mind, I will only ‘do’ one question.”

She engaged in conversation with me while the sound of the crayon was heard tracing a reply to my “question”—simply a formal request for the arrangement of this interview. In about one minute's time three distinct raps were given as a signal that the experiment was completed, and I took the slate out of Mrs. Duncan's hand as she brought it from under the table.

On the upper surface, in small though perfectly legible characters, was written “Albert's” reply—“I will do anything to oblige. Yes. Albert.” The reply was most pertinent, and certainly answered my “question.”

To have accomplished this fraudulently, Mrs. Duncan would need to have been a remarkably clever woman. She would need to have singled out of innumerable conversations a single phrase uttered with no particular emphasis. Her sleight-of-hand, in the actual process of the slate-writing, must also have been most perfect—more perfect, certainly, than that of any conjuror at present “on the boards.”

That is, briefly, the story of how this interview came about.

It took place at a private residence in Manchester on Sept. 16th, five persons in all attending. The room was illuminated by a bright ruby light and a curtain arranged against one corner of the wall served the purpose of a cabinet. Mrs. Duncan retired into this, and in a minute or two “Albert's” clear, cultured voice was heard complaining at the smallness of his apartment. He was also dissatisfied with the strength of the light, which was immediately lowered to his taste, but

there was still sufficient illumination to enable the writer to make notes, and every one of the other sitters to catch occasional glimpses of the figure of the medium.

“ALBERT” APPEARS

Then “Albert” came into view—his tall form, clothed in ectoplasm, being clearly outlined against the dark curtain of the cabinet. He remained in this condition for quite twenty minutes—except when on two occasions, while I was addressing him, the curtain was drawn back and shielded him from our view; but in neither case did his temporary disappearance occupy more than the space of forty seconds.

“When were you first brought into contact with the medium, and what attracted you?” was the first question submitted him. His voice, coming from the head of the form—personally, I was unable to distinguish the features—was both clear and pronounced.

“It is a most difficult question to answer briefly, “he said.” When I had resided on this side a number of years, I was approached by a person interested in establishing communication with earth, and I was asked whether I would like to participate in a series of experiments. The man who addressed me was called Marklew Douglas. ‘You seem to be very clever in making things,’ he said. ‘Probably you would be useful,’ I was shown the process of building materialised spirit forms so that they become visible to people in the material world. Douglas suggested that I might possibly have the gift of moulding the substance—which I call psychoplasm—into recognisable forms, and at his invitation I consented to conduct some experiments.

“I made many attempts, with varying success. Sometimes I was more successful than at others, but I persevered with the work. Later I discovered that I was not to make the semblance of a human form at all. I had only to clothe the thoughts of the people who presented themselves for materialisation. My task was simply to clothe the thought-form with psychoplasm so that it should become, for a short period, tangible and visible and ‘real’ to your senses.

“It was this work which brought me into contact with Mrs. Duncan. For her I have the highest regard; and I am grateful to the Higher Powers that this channel has been opened out to me, so that I can occasionally render strength and comfort to those who suffer the temporary loss of loved companions.”

“You are the leader, I understand, of a band of spirits who work with the medium?”

“You are under a great misapprehension if you imagine that I, alone, am responsible for the phenomena that occur. We have our chemists here, just as you have on your side, and they who are associated with this work all have their special and particular functions.”

“Can you give me some insight as to the methods of operation which you employ?”

“ALBERT,”THE HYPNOTIST

“During a seance Mrs. Duncan is under the domination of my will. I simply put her to sleep in the same way as any hypnotist would do. In that sense, at least, you may say that she is throughout the seance in the hypnotic condition. When I wish her to do anything, I suggest it. Suggestion is at the root of it all. You might also say that I take control her brain and body.

“There are occasions, fortunately rare, when I am called away during a seance to attend to other important duties. I have no doubt that, in such cases, a stronger personality in the flesh might exercise a measure of influence over Mrs. Duncan, and she would act on his suggestions. Under such influence, for example, she might rise and impersonate a so-called spirit. . But my contact with her would not be completely broken, and I should immediately return and explain what had happened. In such circumstances you would recognise how valuable would be the services of a band of spirits such as are associated with this medium. In fact, there are always several in attendance; otherwise we should not hold a seance at all.”

“Is your work with Mrs. Duncan confined to the period of the seance, or are there any preparations made beforehand?”

“Yes, preparations have to be made. The medium feels me working on her psychic constitution sometimes several hours before the start of the sitting. Frequently the effect is an agitation of the mind, and she may even become pessimistic as to the success of a seance.

“I have been looking at you while standing here, and I should just like to say how you appear from my point of view. You seem to be very shadowy and dark. You appear the mere figments of what you feel you are. It is often very strange for those who are coming in contact with earth, for the first time since their passing, to note the physical appearance of loved ones left behind. They think that they are alive, and that it is you who are dead.”

“It is, doubtless, a very difficult experience to attempt to materialise for the first time?”

“So much depends upon the sitter. The successful sitter is the one who maintains a balanced and open mind. The emotional sitter is at a disadvantage. Supposing you and I were old friends, and something happened which took you away to a foreign country.... We do not hear from one another.... Yeas later I meet you suddenly in the same house. What would happen? Well, we should both be overcome! So when you go to a seance, and I in spirit attempt to materialise for the first time, there naturally arises great emotion. If the sitter keeps his mind in an even state, and is determined not to be excited, the spirit, manifesting as it does in a condition abnormal to it, is all the more likely to remain calm and self-possessed. In such circumstances there is certainly more likelihood of evidence of identity being obtained.”

“ALBERT” AND CECIL HUSK

“I should like to ask if you, ‘Albert,’ have met many of the controls of the great physical mediums of the past: Have you met ‘John King,’ Abdula,’ or ‘Ernest,’ for instance?”

“No, I have not had the privilege of meeting any of those you mention. But you may be interested to know that I have met one distinguished in your annals—and he has rendered considerable service in advancing my own work. I have met Cecil Husk, whom you will recognise as one who, when on earth, was a materialising medium of great note. Husk’s experience has been invaluable to me, in showing me exactly the type of evidence which is most needed on your side.

“He has particularly interested himself in the development of one branch of our work, and that is the production of what are called ‘spirit lights.’ Of late, you know, we have concentrated on the production of spirit faces. Our present object is to produce both face and light together so that a materialised form may hold the light close to its features, and thus assist its recognition. It is simply a matter of development. We have, of course, to move rather cautiously, lest we overtax the psychic powers of the medium, and she suffers a relapse. We are very human like you, even though we are spirits!”

“In America materialisations are said to be produced more easily than in this country, and that has been put down to the different atmospheres. Have you, ‘Albert.’ in your experiments made any observations as to the effect of weather conditions on materialisation phenomena?”

“Generally speaking, a dry and frosty night is the most helpful.”

“What would you estimate as the weight of the average materialised form produced through Mrs. Duncan’s mediumship?”

“That is an interesting aspect. A spirit who on your side lead but a frail figure would not weigh more than four or five pounds when materialised! Many of the forms built would probably weigh about eight or nine pounds. There are instances—in the case of abnormally developed persons—where the forms weighed as many as twenty-six or thirty pounds. But these are exceptions. With Mrs. Duncan we could draw about twenty-six to thirty pounds of substance, but she could not bear the withdrawal of more than that.”

THE PART THE SITTERS PLAY

“What have you to say in regard to the theory that the sitters contribute some psychic power during a séance?”

“I agree with it wholeheartedly. I might illustrate by referring to the contributions of those now assembled. Mrs. B—seems to be a frail person, and it would superficial appear as though she could contribute nothing of any value. But she has a certain amount of lime in the system, upon which we can draw. We might extract as much as an ounce. After a seance she will feel a reaction. It would locate itself in the soreness of the bones all over the body, and general physical exhaustion. Mr. B—would feel the after-effect in the region of the lungs, his particular contribution being to the breathing of the materialised forms. You would feel the reaction in exhaustion of the brain.

“In a gathering such as a seance several people may contribute to the success, each in his own special way. From the medium I take the psychoplasm—a tissue like substance—which makes the figures visible. But quite as much depends on the sitters who contribute psychic force, and incidentally this largely accounts for the quick likes and dislikes characteristic of the medium. Certain types of people ‘blend’ with Mrs. Duncan because they supply the psychic power she needs. Others, again, contribute little or nothing, and the medium is not ‘drawn’ to them. Of course she does not always understand this herself, and is frequently nonplussed by her own reaction or attitude in regard to certain persons, against whom she knows she has no reason for grievance, but whose mere presence she finds it difficult to tolerate.”

“What form of preparation do you suggest to your sitters prior to attending a materialisation seance?”

“There are no preparations that I can suggest. I have been in contact with a great number of people who cherish the idea of taking a bath before a seance, adorning themselves in white linen, etc. What does it matter what clothes you wear, or whether you have had a dozen baths? You always appear to us as you ARE—not as you pretend, or would like yourself to be. Your exterior does not matter. What is needed is a clean and balanced mind.”

“Do you, or any of the other members of your band, derive personal benefit from your work in this channel?”

“I feel very happy in my work, especially when I can bring comfort to those who suffer and are almost without hope. My work means everything to me. One day, when the medium comes to our side of life, I will be waiting to meet her, and together we may go forward to a higher plane. My sitters often say how grateful they are for experiences which are given them. I want no thanks! It is sufficient, to know that some good has been accomplished, and in that knowledge I derive great benefit and, needless to say, much happiness.”

“It is almost impossible to describe this realistic conversation as it appeared to those who were present.

“Albert” was on view most of the time, but towards the end he disappeared in person, leaving us what he called his “voice-box”—a considerable affair, about five feet high, and having a loud speaker appearance at the top. From this his voice emerged.

He dramatically illustrated several points in his conversation by actual demonstration then and there, as, for instance, when he wished to show what would happen if, in his absence, Mrs. Duncan came under the influence of one of her sitters: the curtain closed on the voice-box, but opened quickly afterwards to reveal a full-form figure of considerable proportions standing in front of the cabinet. Slowly the figure turned round until its “face” came in view. It was the form of Mrs. Duncan clothed in ectoplasm.

TEN-YARDS YARDS OF ECTOPLASM!

Still more remarkable were the closing demonstrations Mrs. Duncan was influenced to walk out of the cabinet on three occasions, and each time a long trail of ectoplasm was visible to our sight.

On the final occasion no fewer than ten yards (measured) of this material stretched along the floor, and appeared to emanate from her mouth and nostrils. It flickered and curled as a living substance, and reminded one of the raiments spoken of in the account of the historic seance held on the Mount of Transfiguration—as “white as snow.”

The medium retraced her steps to the cabinet, the ectoplasmic ribbon, in some places a yard wide, extending behind her. Suddenly it whisked along the floor. Part of it seemed to disappear into the cabinet, part apparently vanished where it lay.

In the space of half-a-minute Mrs. Duncan, breathing heavily, walked, out of the recess and was placed in an adjacent chair. She was enveloped in a cold perspiration. The pupils of her eyes were turned completely upwards. Then, as we made the measurements recorded above, she came slowly to herself.

So ended a most magnificent experience, and surely one of the most dramatic interviews any journalist has ever had.

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