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A VISIT WITH LINCOLN.

An Evening with President Lincoln at Springfield.-Talk about the Cabinet.

-Conversation with Gen. Greeley.

Editor of Caledonian:

In my last letter, I promised to tell in this, the story of an evening spent with President Lincoln and wife at their Springfield home between the time of his election and their start for Washington. To understand this, it will be necessary to allude to some occurrences that took place in New York before leaving home.

Soon after the election of Mr. Lincoln, a man came into my place of business one day, and said that he had been sent to me by Mr. Greeley for information that he thought I might be able to give. He then said, "I am a republican and a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln. By trade I am a hatter, and I desire to make a hat for our new president. I came to Mr. Greeley in the hope that he might be able to give me the size of Mr. Lincoln's head. He was unable to do so and sent me to you." I was unable to help the man, but told him that I was acquainted with a neighbor of the President to whom I would write if he wished, and find out the size of hat worn by Mr. Lincoln. This I did and soon the reply came that he wore a hat-size seven and an eighth. I at once gave the information to the hatter.

In a few days the man re-appeared at my place of business, having in his hand a very handsome russet leather hat case. Opening it he brought out a beautifully finished "Stove Pipe," in the inside of which was a drab traveling hat very fine and soft.

"How can I get this parcel to the President?" the hatter inquired. I told him that I expected to go West myself very soon and should probably see the President and if he wished I would take charge of the hat box and see that it reached him. A day or two before leaving for the West I called upon Mr. Greeley when the following colloquy took place.

"I am about starting for the West," I said, "and expect soon to see our new President. Can I bear any message for you to him?" "No!" he promptly replied. "You have been writing to him perhaps," I said. "I never write to presidents," he answered. "I do," I said, "and I wrote to this one the other day asking him to make you postmaster general." "What did you do that for? I don't want any office," he answered petulantly. My presence and conversation did not interrupt him in his writing, and he kept right on scratching. Presently he raised his head and said, "If you say anything to the President as coming from me-tell him to make Colfax or Fitz Henry Warren postmaster general," and again resumed his writing. Soon he again raised his head; and said, "I suppose the President by this time is turning over in his mind who shall be invited to become members of his cabinet. He will doubtless try to find some one in the South that he can with propriety invite into his official family." Then picking up a scrap of paper lying upon his table before him he wrote five names of southern men. Two were Virginians, two were North Carolinians and one a Kentuckian. Then folding the scrap he handed it to me saying that I might hand it to the President and say to him that in

his opinion any one of those whose names he had written might be safely invited to become a member of his cabinet.

It was a little after the new year that I reached Springfield. It was midday when I sought the President's reception office. The governor of the state had kindly allowed him the use of a large and eligibly situated room in the state house. The entrance to this room was direct from the corridor; no guard attended the door, and a simple rap upon it was answered by the President himself with "Come in!" I found the room well filled with people some twenty or more being present. Some were politicians, some were newspaper men and some were "plain people" from the country districts. After salutation, the President said to me, quietly, that he would like to have some conversation with me, but it would be impossible with so many people about. He then asked me if I could come to his house that evening. "My wife and myself will be alone tonight," he said. I told him that I would be there after supper. Taking in my hand the latter's present I sought the Lincoln mansion. The President admitted me at the door and ushered me into the front parlor, where Mrs. Lincoln was busy with her needle work. The parlors were of good size and separated by folding doors. They were neatly furnished and long pier glasses were placed between the windows at either end.

As preliminary to the evening's session, I told the President that I had brought from New York a present for him, which was in a hat box out in the hall. He went out and brought in the box. I unlocked the padlock that fastened the lid on, and took out the hats. Taking the "stove pipe" in his hand he examined it carefully and then exclaimed, "That is a beauty!" Putting the hat upon his head to see how it fitted him he again exclaimed, "It fits me perfectly!" Then adjusting it to his head, he walked up in front of the pier glass. "Wife!" he said, "if nothing else comes of this scrape we are going to have some new clothes, are we not?" Mrs. Lincoln then stated that since her husband's election six different tailors from six different cities had visited them and taken his measure, and each had made for him a suit of clothes of the finest material and skilled workmanship.

The President then inquired what appeared to be the public sentiment in the East in regard to the extraordinary demonstrations being made in the South especially in South Carolina. I told him that in New York there seemed to be a disloyal element led by Mayor Wood, outside of that influence there seemed to be great unanimity in all parties in favor of preserving the Union at whatever cost. He told me of some amusing things that had taken place at his office. This was one. Among his many callers, there came one day a delegation of half a dozen men announcing themselves as "Southerners;" as they filed in he noticed that one of them was wearing an elaborate cockade upon his hat. He soon seemed to realize the ridiculous figure he was cutting, and tried with indifferent success to hide his cockade.

"Weed had been here to see me," the President said. "I noticed it in the papers," I replied. "He has been here twice" he continued. "I noticed that also," I answered. According to Weed the trouble between him and Mr. Greeley did not amount to much. As the President had introduced the subject I did not hesitate to ask him what he said. "Weed says" continued the President, "that Mr. Greeley is a sincere, honest man, but that it had been his (Weed's) misfortune to get on the wrong side of him, and he could not get back."

It was evident that the visits of Mr. Weed to the President were in the interest of Mr. Seward, from their well known

intimacy. "You have noticed probably," said the President, "that I have already invited Mr. Bates of Missouri to become a member of my cabinet-what do you think of it?" "I think it a good appointment," I said, "for he is considered an able man, and represents an element in the old whig party that has worked heartily with the republicans in the late campaign. He having introduced the subject of his cabinet, I ventured to bring out the memorandum that Mr. Greeley has asked me to hand him. The President scanned the list of names very closely. After a while he said, mentioning the name first on the list, "He won't do!" He then read the second name. "That man wrote a very hateful letter the other day." He then read the other three names.

"Not one of these can become a member of my cabinet," he said. I was surprised at the slight regard he paid to the opinion of the most eminent man in his party. I then said, "Will you pardon me if I make a suggestion?" "Certainly, I like to get suggestions," he replied. "Considering the relations of Mr. Seward to the republican party, I think I would, if I were in your place, offer him the position of secretary of state." At this Mrs. Lincoln dropped her work and holding up both hands, exclaimed: "Never! Mr. Seward in the cabinet! Never. If the present disturbed condition of things should ultimately quiet down, Mr. Seward would get all the credit for it, but if matters went wrong, the blame would all be laid to my husband." I then said to Mrs. Lincoln, "If perchance your husband should think it wise to do as I have suggested that would be his part, in my opinion well performed. But I should hope that Mr. Seward would reply, 'I am a senator! At present that is the highest point of my ambition.'" Mr. Lincoln made no remark. The evening being far spent I withdrew.

Strangely enough who should appear a few hours later at Springfield but Mr. Greeley himself. I heard that he had arrived at a neighboring hotel during the night. I at once sought him out. I found him in the public room with his overcoat on and his satchel by his side. He told me that he was on his way to Jacksonville to fulfil an engagement to lecture that night and invited me to accompany him. Urging me to go, I consented; at the station each purchased the latest Chicago paper, when I glanced at the telegraph column and in a dispatch from Albany saw that Ira Harris had been elected United States senator by the legislature. A detail of the votes in the nominating convention showed that at one point Mr. Greeley came within three votes of receiving the nomination. Turning to Mr. Greeley I said, "Do you see that dispatch from Albany and how near you came to being made the senator?" "Yes," he says, "I see it. But I could not be made senator. Weed would have broken two banks before he would have allowed me to be made senator." "Yes," I said, "but Weed visited our new President the other day and set you up as high as a kite."

"What did he say?" enquired the philosopher. "He told Mr. Lincoln that you were an honest, sincere man, but that it had been his misfortune to get on the wrong side of you and he could not get back." "Yes," said Mr. Greeley, "he came to me and wanted to 'make up' and I told him that whenever he got over the notion of making money out of politics we would work together as we formerly did but until then we would work separately as we do now." Thus within a few hours I had learned from two of the principals of the late political firm of Seward, Weed & Greeley, why the firm had been dissolved.

The morning after the lecture at Jacksonville we returned to Springfield, Mr. Greeley going to his hotel. An hour or so later I called upon him and found him busy writing in his room.

"Has the President called upon you yet," I enquired. "No," he said. "He will soon be here I am sure," I answered. Then leaving him I went directly to the President's office which I found full of people. Speaking to the president aside, I asked him if he knew that Mr. Greeley was at the St. Nicholas hotel. "Yes, and why don't he come to see me?" he replied. "For obvious reasons," I said. "If you see him while here you will have to call upon him." The President then turned to his audience and said that he was obliged to leave; after a general hand-shaking the room was vacated. Then putting on his long surtout coat, we went together to Mr. Greeley's room. I left them together and they were in consultation for about two hours. What would the half a hundred newspaper reporters present in the town have given to have been able to report the interview between these two remarkable men.

Mr. Greeley was under engagement to lecture in St. Louis two evenings later on. During the day he received a message from Frank Blair stating that there was great excitement in St. Louis over the prospect of his lecture, that he feared a riot and advised him not to come. Mr. Greeley was indignant at what he called "the cowardly message." He abandoned St. Louis and took the first train to New York.

In my next letter I will relate my recollection of Mr. Lincoln at the time he gave his famous address at the Cooper Institute Feb. 1861, his visit to Plymouth church and his first introduction to Mr. Beecher.

George B. Lincoln.

Tenafly, N. J., Nov. 10, 1890.