Dec. 26, 1908

Wife Ida M. Tarbell,
Dear Madam:

Knowing the work you have accomplished in giving to the public an inside view of the workings of the Standard Oil Co., the writer is taking the liberty of addressing you in regard to another subject, the Coal Dust, to inquire if it may be of interest to you.

To explain matters as briefly as possible, my father was engaged in the retail coal business for nearly forty years, having success
his father-in-law, I saw Mr. Wright, the pioneer of the business in Philadelphia. With his brother-in-law, he carried on a successful enterprise for many years, until the "Reading" came into the field and ruined them. They were situated on the North Penn R.R., and handled only the choicest output of a few select collieries, enjoying the best class of trade in their city, until with the leasing of the latter road by the Reading, their former avenues of supply were cut off and the Reading's own coal forced upon them to their great detriment.

As secretary of the Phila. Coal Exchange and as a member of its committees, my father gained much valuable information on the gradual trend of affairs, he kept clipping from the daily newspapers, showing the events that were taking place year after year, with the idea at some time of writing about the subject in a success, as you have done in regards to the "Standard." Within the last year he has been hopelessly paralyzed, and all possibility of furthering his plans has been prevented: he has asked me to endeavor to put his clipping, covering a period of many forty years to some use, and I have wondered
If you would be willing to look into
the subject with a view of taking
up. If so, I shall appreciate greatly
the favor of a reply, or if not,
any suggestion you might have
to spare will be gratefully
received.

Dr. May you will permit
the liberty I have taken, I
remain
Respectfully,

Elisha B. Staphen.