

HENRY I. HIGGINSON.
44. STATE STREET. BOSTON

November 3, 1905.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,

40, West Ninth Street, New York, N. Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

The negotiations about Miss Lawton have gone on this week. Let me say, in the first place, that Messrs. Ames and Deland are to be trusted, and any imputation on their integrity or honor is a great error. In the second place, those gentlemen made a mistake last spring in engaging Miss Lawton on such short acquaintance, dramatically speaking. She played one part, and was interesting and strong in it. Judging from that, they thought she could play many parts. I was struck with her talents and promise, - and also with her ignorance of matters appertaining to the stage. I told you so, and for that reason was ready to help her to more education. I thought so then, and as she probably has learned little since then, I think so now. A thorough education for the stage isn't got in six months or a year. She saw various people abroad, and reached the conclusion that she had better learn by practice on the stage, and Messrs. Ames and Deland made a mistake in engaging her, and she made a mistake in accepting the engagement. It was an error on both sides, and I think that fact must be remembered in trying to adjust matters.

This week I had a talk with Miss Lawton, and then one with Mr. Clemens, from which I deduced that they both would favor a compromise. The third day Mr. Clemens met Mr. Ames at my room. Mr. Clemens immediately began in his earnest way to say that he should like to try this matter before a court of newspaper men and critics, and went on until Mr. Ames said: "Very well, we will put it before the courts if you prefer." Mr. Clemens said he should prefer it. I then suggested that there might be a middle course, to which Mr. Clemens demurred. I then asked him straight out if there was no middle course, and he said "No," - upon which Mr. Ames arose and bid us good-bye. After he had gone, I had more talk with Mr. Clemens, and found him willing to make a compromise. Miss Lawton then came in and was ready to compromise on a basis which I think would have been accepted; but the mischief was done. Messrs. Ames and Deland had gone to their lawyer and put the affair in his hands, and it will come before the courts. I do not believe this course was necessary, and doubt if Miss Lawton wished it. Mr. Clemens was uncompromising and rather short in his tone to Mr. Ames; his manner was certainly anything but conciliatory. Inasmuch as the glove has been thrown down and picked up, I do not see how it can be avoided.

Let me repeat that I think these gentlemen made a mistake in engaging Miss Lawton because she was not sufficiently versed in the ways of the stage, and Miss Lawton made a mistake in accepting these engagements no matter how the conditions were put before her, as she wasn't fit for it. I am merely giving you my own opinion. Under these circumstances I think some compromise would have been wise, but I have done with the whole matter.

Miss Lawton is sure that she made a success in "Tess;" the managers are sure that she did not. Miss Lawton has certain letters to prove her position; perhaps the managers can prove the contrary. If Miss Lawton and the gentlemen had agreed that she should play, perhaps, two second parts, and two first parts, or something of that sort, this quarrel might have been avoided. I regard it unfortunate for Miss Lawton that her name should appear in a dispute of this kind, and it certainly is unfortunate for these gentlemen. My object as well as yours was to keep the peace, but Mr. Clemens made it impossible.

Miss Lawton, as I now understand it, had accepted this engagement before she went abroad, which did not leave her sufficient time to study for her life on the stage, and was ignorant of it. She is a person of great ardor and of promise, but I can only repeat, that in my judgment, long, careful training under masters, and close study of the finished artists to be found in Europe, are necessary to form a great actress. Miss Lawton is troubled about her future, and thinks the trouble with these gentlemen will hurt her. In my judgment she is the only person in whose hands her future lies. If she is wise, she will do well, and if she fails, it will be her own fault.

I am sorry about the whole matter, and the only pleasant recollection connected with it is that I had the pleasure of seeing you.

Very truly yours,

Henry L. Higginson
by L. C.