

Aug. 20, 1939.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I want to tell you how impressed I was with "All in the Day's Work". The story of your business life is well told and fascinating, but more than that is your unconscious inclusion of your high ideals and your never-ending quest for the noble things of life. That part of your story will last even when I forget the struggle for the Standard Oil story. The world is rich because of the few lives, like your own, with which we have been privileged to associate-- even though it has been at long range.

Perhaps you will not remember your visit to Sioux Falls and that I took your picture in our studio. You had sinus trouble, or something else, and I took you to a doctor. That was during your lecturing days. You wanted to see how we lived and cooked and combined art with scrubbing floors. I remember even showing you the dark rooms and storage rooms. You liked the pictures and returned some, autographed, to us. This is something you did not put in "All in the Day's Work"-- you were easy to take and reacted to any suggestion we made with an intelligence and courtesy quite out of the ordinary. My partner, Miss Gordon Canfield, always says you were the finest lady she ever met-- dignified, restful, with a fine appreciation of the things of the spirit, and always helpful and considerate of your fellow workers.

When you were here, I told you of the time, long ago, when you had Mr. Henry's house in the Catskills and I bought a collie puppy from you. That puppy and I had many misadventures-- I sewed up an oilcloth bag, leaving a hole in the top for his head to stick out-- he ate my lunch, when I was not looking, and this was his first solid food. The dog and I were in an unhappy state of mind when we reached N.Y.

I was intensely interested in your story of your efforts to put Madame Roland down on paper. I am glad you kept at her. She did not bring you in much money, but she certainly taught you how to do research work. Her life took possession of yours for the time being. That interests me, for the same thing has happened to me.

Do you remember Madame Jumel of New York? She was Alexander Hamilton's mistress, and, later, married Aaron Burr. Her story runs from her birth on a French ship bound for Hayti, to Yorktown, to two months after the death of Abraham Lincoln. She was the richest woman in N.Y. for a long time and lived in the Jumel Mansion (still standing). She was, in the accepted term, a bad woman-- beautiful and scheming-- with all men from Franklin to Washington admiring her. The women hated her, but the men flocked to her home where political schemes were hatched. She it was who went to France in her own boat to bring Napoleon with her to the Bronx, there to set up a new kingdom.

I can't admire this woman but, like Madame Roland, she fascinates me and I am writing a novel about her. I wrote a three act play centering about her, but my second act was so far wrong that I am not doing anything with it. My great trouble is to get the necessary reference material out here. The library does not even have good biographies of the leading characters-- but I am on my way. Each little thing must be authentic, from the type of lanterns used in the boats of 1769 to the lay of the land on Manhattan Island-- the clothes worn and the way slaves were treated in N.Y. in 1776. Each character must speak and act as he really did. It has taken years of research, interlarded with making a living, but it has been a fine experience.

I am working hard on the book-- I chew down Nitro-glycerin and Digalen and keep going in spite of a slight difficulty I have.

You would be interested in our work now- not photography- but writing papers, book reviews, speeches etc for club women. Of course, it is poorly paid for what woman thinks a club paper worth much, even though she could not write it herself? We have some very fine women asking us to do their work, but some are like this lady who wrote; "I want to buy a Dollar's worth of Christian Citizenship". Of course, we sold it to her.

Now, before I close, just let me say how much I have enjoyed and profited by your Lincoln books- your Owen Young and Napoleon. I have reviewed them all for club women. Your "All in the Day's Work" was used in the course on American Biography by Sioux Falls College this summer. In your book, you skipped the hours of weariness that must have been partner with your successes. That is part of your bigness. You will always be an inspiration to me and to the people of the world. Conn. is a fine place to settle the arm chair and watch a new world in the making. I wonder how long greed and intolerance will rule? You have done your part in making a start toward sanity.

1711 W 18th St  
Sioux Falls, S.D.

Most sincerely

*S. Edwards Jones*