

Journals

December 9, 1920

Miss Marianne McCoy,
East High School,
Minneapolis, Minn.

My dear Miss McCoy:

Your letter of October 21 has lain so long unanswered on my desk because of my absence in the West. I have only just returned.

It is a pleasure to know that you like "He Knew Lincoln." Billy Brown was a real person, although that it not his name; and while it is true that I made a story out of him, nevertheless I hope that I have caught a little of his feeling towards Lincoln. I wanted to do that because it has always seemed to me one of the most beautiful things that I found in searching for my material on Lincoln's life, and I wanted to share it with others.

You ask for suggestions to high school girls on writing. That, my dear, is a serious question and requires a more careful answer than, I am afraid, I have time for this morning.

There are two or three things, however, that you should remember; and one of these is, that you be sure you have something to write about before you start. Whatever the theme, try to master the content of it, its meaning, and be very careful to search your mind for what you think about the thing. And when you feel that you have something to say about your subject, put it down as simply as you can, trying to convey to others the thought that it awakens in your mind or the feeling in your heart.

Do not be afraid to write freely and naturally. Call upon your imagination to help you build up your material so that it will be vivid. Avoid, above all, anything that is pretentious. Study the best writing and learn to love the best. You may not be conscious that ~~that~~ is affecting your own efforts, but it will do so as surely as associating with people of fine character will influence you.

I shall be glad if this little letter will be of any use to you.

Very sincerely yours,

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