

Springfield, Ill., March 20, 1899.

My Dear Miss Tarbell:

I made a hurried trip to Petersburg today and talked with Mr. N. W. Branson with reference to the story of Albert Brooks and his appointment to a place in the Interior Department at the instance of Lincoln. Mr. Branson is one of the ablest and best known lawyers in Central Illinois. Anything he says may be relied upon.

"I have heard this story a thousand times", said Mr. Branson, "and I have no doubt it is substantially true. Mr. Brooks has been dead seven or eight years. He was a little, scrawny, bleary-eyed man, not at all impressive, but was regarded at Petersburg as a man of considerable ability. According to the story current here, Lincoln said to Mr. Smith in a half-joking way: 'I know Brooks to be able to fill acceptably any position in the Interior Department, from Secretary down.' That part of the story which represents Lincoln as saying, 'Appoint him to the position he seeks, or I may find occasion to appoint him Secretary of the Interior,' is entirely new to me. I do not believe Lincoln said such a thing; it is too unlike him. Brooks is aspired only to a clerkship, and it hardly possible that Lincoln could have made such a threat seriously. Whether or not Brooks was a 'side partner' of Lincoln at Petersburg, I cannot say. Such

arrangements in these days were very common. However, with the exception mentioned, I believe the story to be true.

"A daughter of Mr. Brooks lives in Washington, D.C., or did live there a few years ago. She is the wife of a Presbyterian clergyman--a Mr. Ramsdel or Ramsden."

I also read Mr. Branson the story about John S. Wilson. He has never heard it before, and thought its details somewhat improbable. I will see if I can find out anything more about the Wilson story.

Very sincerely yours,

*J. M. Can Down*