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PRIVATE CLASSES IN
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Miss Ida Tarbell
132 East 19th Street
New York City

My dear Miss Tarbell

I have read with interest your Life of Abraham Lincoln, and listened with delight to the talk which you gave before the City Club of Rochester. I have long been an interested student of the life and works of Abraham Lincoln, and as a teacher of English I have always considered his style the perfection of pure English prose.

I was somewhat astounded the other day to hear a college professor assert that Abraham Lincoln wrote compositions on the back of a wooden shovel. My understanding has been that he "did" his sums in arithmetic in that way because of a lack of paper or slate, but the real question comes on his "writing compositions". Can you tell me whether there is a scintilla of evidence anywhere that Abraham Lincoln ever "wrote compositions" in the sense in which that expression is understood by a modern American school boy?

I have always been firmly of the opinion that Abraham Lincoln never wrote anything unless there was a good reason in the nature of things for his writing it.

I am sorry to trouble you, but I should greatly appreciate your answer to my question.

Very sincerely yours

Ernest R. Clark

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