



THE UNIVERSITY.
MANCHESTER.

February 25, 1921.

Miss Ida Tarbell,
132 E. 19th street,
New York City.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I am venturing to write you concerning a subject in which I have become interested, and in which you have doubtless been interested for a long time. I am an American, lecturing this year in the University of Manchester in American history; and I have been asked to give a talk at a conference in the spring upon some topic chosen from that field. I can find nothing better than an account of the growth in popular regard for Lincoln; the appreciation of his actual service, the accretions of legend and tradition, the tendency to regard him as a prophet and an infallible seer, - all the phases of hero-worship which just now seem to be about at their probable height. There are, of course, possibilities of comparison with the earlier Washington cult, which has now passed, leaving the air cleared for a judicial appreciation of Washington's real worth - which is likely to be underrated, I suspect, until critical people have forgotten the uncritical adulation of the last century. The two cases of national hero-worship, amounting almost to a symbolic patriotism-cult, offer some chance of tentative generalization concerning the life-history of popular attitudes.

If you are not too busy, may I ask you for your own opinion of the recent and present Lincoln cult? What has produced it, and why should certain phases of a well-balanced character be seized upon and enthusiastically emphasized in popular speech and in the press, while others are ignored? It is obvious that the appearance of the most-read Lincoln books has always stimulated interest; I am making a graph to show how, from 1865 to 1920, the interest in Lincoln rose and fell, by the index of the number of magazine articles; and another to show the number of Lincoln books produced in different years. One wonders how much of the Lincoln cult is due to Republican oratory? And how much, to a desire to magnify the worth of diamond-in-the-rough public service? Is the sober evaluation of Lincoln's true and inestimable worth, jeopardized by popular adulation and an aura of mythical supermanliness?

I know you are a very busy woman, and that I write you

*Nothing more
Roosevelt*

*Course of Lincoln
Culturing in 1912
Handley & Hart*

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2

audaciously when I ask you, if you can spare the time, to write me on this subject. But I am hoping that your own interest in it may prompt you to give a stranger, who will if so fortunate receive whatever you send with keen appreciation, some of your own observations or reflections on the matter.

Yours most sincerely,

(Miss) *James M. Mochan*