

New York, April 30, 1920

My dear Mr. Shaw:

I have just come back from a three months' speaking trip, and find in my accumulated mail your letter of March 6th. I hope it was acknowledged. It is so important, that I am losing no time in thanking you for having taken the trouble to write it.

If in the days when I was working on my Life of Lincoln, over 20 years ago, I came across any account of this Rivers and Harbour Convention at Chicago, I have utterly forgotten it. Just as soon as it is possible, I am going to get at my notes of the period, now packed away, and see. Clearly it is important, and clearly in a life of Lincoln where the author was trying to do what I was it should have been taken into consideration. I am quite as interested to know whether I had the fact, and it fell on my "idiotic area" -- an unusually large one, by the way -- or whether I deliberately cut it out for lack of space, or whether I never found it. I rather think it is the third.

I am greatly obliged to you for calling my attention to the matter, for I am trying my best to get time for some fresh Lincoln work. I am to begin in the fall a Boys' Life of Lincoln for the Boy Scout Magazine, and also am getting ready for a semi-autobiographical piece of work, in which I want to rehearse some of my experiences 20 years ago, and introduce as side lights many of the things that have come to me in the interval. If I can command the time I ought to be able to do a piece of work which I hope will be interesting at least to Lincoln lovers. In that I would be only too glad to introduce this letter of yours, with a little discussion on my having overlooked it; or if I find when I consult my notes that I really had something on it and it never penetrated, to state the fact. What I hope to get out of this is not only some fresh lights on Lincoln's life, but some comments on the collecting and selecting of materials in the writing of biography.

I feel I am stating this rather awkwardly, but this is the first time I am tried to get down the idea which I have been turning over, so you will forgive me. Now, would you be willing that I should hold this letter of yours for introduction into such an article? Of course, you should be paid for your work, and have full credit for your kind. If you should prefer to use the material in a signed article, you certainly should go ahead and do it. That would not debar me, when I was ready for my work, from quoting from your article, with the autobiographical comments that I can make. I shall be glad, my dear Mr. Shaw, to hear from you at your convenience. I am sending you an autographed copy of "In Lincoln's Chair."

Very sincerely yours,