

MISS IDA M. TARBELL
NEW YORK CITY.

APRIL 30th. 1901.

Dear Madam.

Your letter of 1st. inst. & April Mc Clure, duly received. The "disbanding of the Confederate Army" is interesting, and I would cheerfully contribute to your effort on the lines indicated, if such material as you require could be supplied from my own experience. My home, however, & my "neighbors" were north of the Potomac River, in St. Mary's County, the most southern of the western shore of Maryland; and while the effect of the war in that section, was an immense loss of property, there was no approximation to the devastation and demoralization south of the Potomac.

Returning to St. Marys County after the close of the war, it was impossible not to see & feel the radical change in physical as well as in political conditions. Loss of property was beyond estimation; land, there was, in abundance; but the slave property, which had made land valuable, was now, no longer property; and the system to which long usage had accustomed the entire community, had passed, without the substitution of any other in place of that which had been abolished. Depreciation in the value of land followed. The same problem, therefore, was pressing, there as elsewhere, for solution, viz, how to begin a business life subordinated to conditions for which there had been no preparation.

Out of this chaos, somehow, some sort of order was gradually evolved, & in time, the "bruised arms hung up for monuments" the quondam soldier, - plodded "in the ways of peace".

There has been, however, no re-habilitation in that section. Year after year, a continuous drifting away from it, of the young and strong and ambitious, has gone on, emptying the old colonial homesteads as well as - humbler homes, opening the way & inviting to occupy, in their places, the - thriftless White & the roving Negro, until after the lapse of thirty - five years, conditions have deteriorated to a plane far below that of the years immediately following the close of the war.

The recital of my own experiences & of "the process" by which I was able finally to get started comfortably again in life, can be given in a few words. At the beginning of the war, I was a law student in this City. After its close, with my Father's assistance, I began again where I had - left off; but had barely started when the business failure of a trusted relative swept away all my small resources. This misfortune urged to effort & after laboring under difficulties, the practice of law was undertaken in my native County. The outlook was dismal, but with self reliance & hard work, the way was slowly opened to self support & qualified independence. Six years of strenuous effort enabled me to return to Baltimore where, thankfully, I have since pursued the even tenor of a quiet life.

It has sometimes occurred to me, that my duty was, to have remained in my native County & helped rebuild the waste places there; but this was not plain, when I was moved to leave it, and I cannot, now, confess a conviction of mistake.

Respectfully.

David J. Bussey