Letter: George W. Stiff to Ida M. Tarbell, July 15, 1895

Stiff, George W.

http://hdl.handle.net/10456/40057

The copyright owner of this item is unknown. It is the responsibility of the researcher to identify and satisfy the holders of all copyrights.

All materials in the Allegheny College DSpace Repository are subject to college policies and Title 17 of the U.S. Code.
Princeton, N.J. July 15, 1875.

Miss Ida Tarbell.

According to my promise, when introduced to you a few days ago, I will give you some recollections of Mr. Lincoln.

When I was a young teenager in May 1854, I met Mr. Lincoln for the first time in Bloomington, Ill. I heard him trying a case before Judge David Davis, then an Ill. circuit court judge, and a judge of the U.S. Supreme Court and a U.S. senator from Illinois. Mr. Lincoln opposed Curran in the firm, was down to the last Friday of Bloomington. Eddleman was a leading lawyer there, about 40 years of age, a hard, sound man, and a fine speaker; more so than Mr. Lincoln, but he had not that air of abbotlike simplicity which characterized the speaking of Mr. Lincoln.

It was impossible to look at Lincoln not speaking, and believe that he believed everything he said. The argument closed, the jury retired, and finally returned into court, saying they could not agree. Mr. Lincoln stood by the jury box, thought for a few moments, and then announced to the court, that the cause had begun with
each party paying his own costs. The action
was for slander, libel, and the plaintiff
suing for the defendant. I had found an introduction to Mr. Lincoln for the
purpose of employing him to help me in a cause which I was about to
meet in the same Court at that
Term of the same Court. Then came adjournment,
immediately after the announcement of the
settlement of the case by Mr. Lincoln.

'The next day,' I said to Mr. Lincoln, 'If I had been
in your place, I could have settled that case with Efidley. I think you
would not have let that go like that, Mr. Lincoln. Why, he was
in the exact same.' 'Well, I thought so too,' but

'Efidley got an affirmative plea on me,
and he got the case and closed the case.

'I told him three times more, and hung
his pickerel, I can't beat him.' It happened
in my case that Efidley was on the other
side, and as he was at the front and not to that
of Mr. Lincoln was with me, I sent his
client to mine, and they settled very
favorably to my client. I was for the de-
fendant in my case, and had drawn three
pleas; Mr. Lincoln read them, said they
were good, but that there was too much
of them. He then redrew the pleas, I
filed them, and the Settlement ensued.
As the speech was over, our entertainment for the remainder of the evening was listening to the conversation of Mr. Lincoln. It seemed perfectly natural to hear the old man say, 'That be what I do, too. I saw, but I was only after the evening was over, that I had selected the best story, but Lincoln had said anything. I believe it is a fact that Mr. Lincoln told more stories than he has the reputation of telling. I remember some of the things that he said during the evening. He got to talking about the early lawyers and speakers of Illinois. He said, "Booth McCammon is the best story, yet in Illinois; no top to the end." He said, "Stephen A. Douglas is the best Illinois Circuit lawyer. Yes, I once knew, nothing can happen to the United States without him. He said, "Just the Butterfield of Chicago, the most versatile and a professional speaker he ever heard, and that "Edwin Smith of Chicago was one of the most eloquent." He gave us a history of a political meeting in Springfield, Ill., in the memorable campaign of 1840, at which both sides were heard. The Whigs were inspired
by Butterfield and Wilkie, and the Demo-
crats, by LeGrand Jones whose name I
cannot now pronounce correctly, and
shall not say, but think I now know Thoms-
son Gamble at the Notts had the opening
and close of the debate. Mr. Lincoln said
"Men are tired of hard times, and painted the hard
times of that day in glowing colors;
charying all the pecuniary distresses of the
people to the ignorant, narrow-minded
of the Democratic Party. "The Democrats
answered, denying that the times were bad,
and saying that was only those who
did business on borrowed capital,
and traveled on, to indoor spec-
dulations, that were in any distress.
that all prudent men who did business
on their own money were prosperous.
Butterfield in his reply said: "These Demo-
crats in Connecticut tell us that there are not hard
times. Why, go where you will, on every
store door, at every blacksmith shop, on
every fijger board at the forks of a road, as
you cross the country in every public place,
you see farmers, lands, houses, horses,
farms, teams, corn, bees, livestock for sale under
the ad

merit for sale under execution; yet,
and they tell us, there are good times: Why, my fel-

low citizens, if these Democratic States have
had lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, when
The Lord God Almighty rained down fire
and brimstone on those devoted cities;
They would have gone out, looked up,
and said, 'Why! These are quite refreshing.

Abraham Lincoln was not only a
great statesman and a pure patriot, but he was
the shrewdest politician of his day. He knew
the People better than any other man. He
never acted before or after, but always at the
right time. As time passes, he will become
more and more known, till like Washington,
his fame will fill the world. And possibly
will sing, "We are coming, Uncle Abe,
have a thousand millions more," to
approach the conduct of the wise of the people, for the
people, and by the people," elected president
at the right time. Although Mr. Lincoln
was commander in chief of the greatest army of
modern times, and brought to a triumph all
close, their greatest war, yet any one acquainted
with him, well knows that he loved peace, not war; that he would lay with the poet,
"Give me one the harp of epic song,
That Homeric singer thrilled along,
But tear away the tangle string,
"For war is not the theme I sing;"
What I have said may not help you
but let the cold play tags of a kins
kin. Take it; it will do you no harm.

Yours truly,
[Signature]

E. M. Duff