May 16, 1921

Mr. William Briggs,
Messrs. Harper Brothers,
Franklin Square, New York.

My dear Mr. Briggs:

I have been over the Browning manuscript a second time, and have made a rough estimate of what might be done with the material.

As I understand it, you would like a Lincoln book. That is a book in the title of which you could legitimately use the Lincoln name. There is no doubt in my mind that such could be made from this material - a substantial and interesting contribution to Lincoln history.

I have roughly divided the material as follows: a section which should present Browning's own picture of himself as you get it in this manuscript. This would be a matter of study and writing. As it stands it is quite hopeless of course, but put enough work on it and you can get an interesting sketch, related at every point to Lincoln. Browning was both his fellow lawyer and fellow Whig. This preliminary sketch of from 12 to 15,000 words would carry the book through Lincoln's nomination.

A second section could be devoted to Dis-union and the first two years of the War. Here you would have constant conversations with Lincoln about all sorts of matters, as well as Browning's comments on the battle of Bull Run, the death of Willie Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln and General Fremont (This includes an admirable letter of Lincoln's to Browning), Lincoln's ideas on the Mason and Slidell matter, his doubts about McClellan, etc.

An important chapter on the emancipation of the negroes can be made. It would include not only Lincoln's own ideas but the ideas of a large number of important people about what Lincoln had determined to do. The general view is that of Unionists like Browning who were opposed to emancipation by proclamation and thought Lincoln was leaning too far towards radicals like Sumner whom they hated, and of whom Browning expresses a very unflattering opinion. I believe this could be made an interesting chapter, and I know it would be valuable.

Browning's term in the Senate ended soon after Emancipation; but he went back frequently on business. The manuscript for the next

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two years is dotted with bits of gossip, many of them worth using; and it contains perhaps 2000 words on the death of Lincoln.

Following this material would be Browning's story of this experience in President Johnson's cabinet - difficulties between Johnson and Stanton - Grant and Johnson - and the effort at impeachment. While this is not Lincoln material, it grows naturally out of the other and is so important historically that it should be used.

There is no doubt that you could easily get a book of from 40 to 50,000 words from the material; and, properly edited, it would be a creditable thing for any publisher.

As for magazine material, my judgment is what it was on the first review of the manuscript. There seem to me three good articles: (1) The study of Browning and Lincoln as friends, fellow politicians and lawyers, up to the time of Lincoln's going to Washington; (2) The struggle over the Emancipation Proclamation, this being largely direct quotation from the journal, pointed up by paragraphs of explanation; and (3) the impeachment of Johnson - here, again, largely Browning's own records of conversations with various people and what went on in the cabinet, made at the time.

This is about what I see in the thing. If, on this showing, you care to have another talk, could you make it Wednesday afternoon of this week at about four o'clock at the Arts Club as before? And could you telephone me your answer tomorrow (Tuesday) morning - Stuyvesant 6674?

Very sincerely yours,

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