GARRETT NEWKIRK
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

735 N. Los Robles,
August 13th, 1920.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
New York.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

I can't express a tithe of the good your letter has done me. I was sort o' in the dumps over my previous note. You have a place for disposing of waste paper, haven't you?

I get your point of view, and you are right, too. So am I really. There is the value as you say of the "color" and the "feel" of the period. The girl, from 1818 to '26 was part of the "Life" either in or close to the family. That ~~eight of~~ eight years contains all the value there is of "light" on Abraham and his father. It fits perfectly my own theories long held, and so I have told the author.

But we are not called on to strain a point or accept slander merely to prove the cousin-ship that is the chief concern of those people. I was not impressed particularly with "the wheels", though I see now how others would be. I had always supposed of course that Thomas made wheels. My grandfather Hammond came to Ohio in 1821, five years later than Thomas from Ky. He was like him a carpenter - had like him the "best set of tools"; he made simple furniture, and all the coffins, I think, for his neighborhood, and people worked in payment on his clearing. And wheels! One of my

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first memories is that of my mother spinning on the wheel her father had made for her, a big wheel. There was a little one we called the "reel" on which the yarn was wound from the spindle. The "skein" removed from the reel was what I had to hold at the age of 5 or 6, till my arms ached, while she wound the yarn into balls. And the cooking I first knew was on the coals, or in kettles hung by the crane. A log house of course; soon we had a board "lean-to", and a stove. At the first, mother has told me, Indians, then peaceable, often looked in at me in my cradle through door or window, and begged all her bread.

The thought came to me to-day almost like a blow, that possibly I am the only one who has studied Lincoln closely, passionately, over sixty years, who has in addition a distinct remembrance of those pioneer conditions. Then strangely enough, after graduating in medicine fifty-two years ago, at "Old Rush", Chicago, being brilliantly green, a mere "country jake", brought up between plow handles, I buried myself in an out of the way region among Missouri hills and mostly unsettled prairies. The people were chiefly Kentuckians and Virginians, with the "dialect" and all their inherited customs. I smoked the cob-pipe before a fireplace with some of the saintliest old women I ever knew; snatched a bit of sleep in strenous hours, lying on the floor or across a bed at the feet of three or four children. Always the fireplace, though there might be a stove in a corner, or in a separate "house", used for the kitchen. One room of logs was a "house", two joined together (like the Thomas Lincoln home in Coles Co.) was a "double house."

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Fate took me not many years later to Chicago, health demanded a change. The life was killing me. Dentistry appealed to my mechanical instinct, so I took to that, had fair success, and some distinction, in time. But the great Libraries had Lincoln, and Birds, and many things beside for my leisure hours, and I was always writing with my reading. I came to know many people of Illinois who had known Lincoln. Among them Trumbull, Oldroyd of course, Geo. F. Root, the war-song maker, Newton Bateman, Paul Selby. For the two last I wrote a chapter on the Underground Railroad, for their Cyclopedia of Illinois History. And there was my best friend of all, Francis Fisher Browne, founder and editor of The Dial, author of The Every Day Life of Lincoln, "cabined, cribbed, confined" by worldly circumstances and ill health - what a story I could tell you of him.

1899

They are all gone, scores and scores of those dear friends, nearly all older, some much older than I. I helped carry to the crematory here six years ago, after his soul had gone to the stars, the body of "Brown the beloved." So Muir called him in a letter to me later, and he soon followed.

My wife has now the best health ever, and in December, 1922, if the Lord spares us, we shall celebrate our "Golden." We are as happy as any two could be, bereft of our children, yet thankful for many sweet friends, the goodness of the Lord, and the glorious beauty of His world.

And here I have gone on and written little

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I intended. I haven't told you of an interesting and important, revealing discovery here in California, of the youngest, only surviving son of John P. Johnston, 76 years old with a live memory. Born in Thomas Lincoln's house of course,—they all were,— and what a character he is.

I have at last traced the record, in Ky. and will have a certified copy of the marriage of Polly. Everything seems to be coming my way for the defense in her case, and I hope when the papers are complete, the author and editor both will be willing to confess publicly their serious mistake.

I'll try and see that cabinet - the one pictured I suppose in your 1st. Vol.

How and where can I get that Indiana data I never heard of? In Indianapolis I suppose. The state is nearly bounded by that city.

Your Scout history idea is great, and I imagine I have some things you could use. I was baptized by Lincoln at the age of 11 years,- and there's a mystery you can't guess. I'll tell you later.

Mrs. Newkirk's grandfather was a Va.-Ky. pioneer. I wrote up his race with Big-foot,(who was after him with his tomahawk) for Harper's Young People many years ago. It is one of a book of stories I can find I guess, "A Round Robin", published by a friend in Illinois.

Oh! If you could only come here, we could both tell you hundreds of things.

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5.

My first book is only a little thing, although it has been growing full 25 years. It will be absolutely plain, no pictures except one little sketch of my own for the frontispiece. I fear it will, yet hope it may not, disappoint you. It has a soul. It will live but make no money. [illegible].

And I feel that you are the only one on earth who really knows deep in, with me, the [illegible]. Rankin comes near it. You've read his "Recollections" doubtless.

Please pardon the awful length of this essay.

Truly yours,
Garrett Newkirk

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