Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

WILLIAM FORTUNE
INDIANAPOLIS

October 19, 1925.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 E. 19th Street,
New York City.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I am delighted to hear from you. Your letter of the 9th inst., came during my absence from home. As a coincident your letter and one from Judge Iglehart of Evansville were together in the pile of mail that had accumulated during my absence. Judge Iglehart has for a long while been urging me to address the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society and to give in an extemporaneous talk an outline of my Lincoln inquiry when a youth of seventeen, among the survivors who intimately knew the Lincoln family during their residence in Indiana. I have been reluctant, but the Judge is quite persistent and has now had November 17th fixed as the date for the talk at Princeton, Indiana. Unfortunately, I cannot be at all sure of my time just now. I have explained this to the Judge but have promised to comply with his request if nothing occurs as an interference.

I shall be very glad to make available to you whatever data I have in my possession. My notebook was found while I was on my trip around the world. It is now rather disappointing to me. In some respects the notes were meager and reveal to me that at the time I was depending too much on my memory, which then was very good. The notes were made on reverse sides of the paper and much care is necessary in tracing them out. I find the incident as to the "King's Jester" is indicated by a very brief note, but this I remember quite vividly, and about a year ago, at the request of Mr. Beveridge, I dictated a statement regarding it for him. This may also serve your purposes and I am, therefore, enclosing a copy of it.

He has not, however, seen my notes and I am sending you herewith a full transcript of these. Some of these could be elaborated if there was opportunity for me to talk with you about them. They were intended at the time to be mere reminders, except that a few of the interviews were rather fully noted in the language of the persons who were interviewed. Impressions and circumstances in some instances could, of course, be more clearly set forth. As mere notes, they may or may not

have significance to you. If I can be helpful to you in making anything out of them, I shall be glad to do what I can in this way.

I am sending you also a copy of a letter from J. Christian Bay giving his explanation as to how he arrived at his conclusion that the book of funny stories mentioned by Nathaniel Griggsby was Quinn's Jests and not one called "King's Jester" or "King's Jests." In my statement I have explained how there might easily have been a mistake in my understanding of what he said or probably a supposition on my part may have influenced my understanding of what he said. Beveridge attaches a good deal of significance to the incident of this book as one that may have had influence on Lincoln's story-telling characteristic which had such a large part in his fame during his life.

The telegram I sent you on Saturday was intended to be an explanation of the delay in responding to your letter. The copies of documents which I am sending herewith will place in your hands most of the material in the rough and this can be further developed according to your desire. There is, of course, much more that should go into your work. I have had much of this in mind without having ever made notes of it. I have in mind particularly the primitive pioneer life of the region, the character of the country and the characteristics of the people; the social and political surroundings, outstanding types of leadership among the people and of men in the vicinity who must have impressed or influenced Lincoln's ideas and character in his youth. If you can get into all of this successfully, I believe you will find it will give something of more interest than importance in a portrayal of Lincoln than anything that has yet been published. Your thought of making it simply a magazine article may be very good for a start, but when you get well into the task you may find you have something worthy of more than a single magazine article..

I am very sorry to learn of the troubles and anxieties of Mrs. Rice. I greatly admire her. She is very, very fine. I shall try to get into communication with her very soon.

With all best wishes for the success of your endeavors and best regards to you personally

Cordially yours,

William Fortune

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library