A. J. WALSMITH
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELOR
OSKALOOSA, IOWA

June 12, 1935

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
120 East Nineteenth Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Please let me thank you for your fine letter of the 4th inst., about the point whether Lincoln read and revised Scripps's Campaign Life.

You say you know you talked with Medill about it and feel quite sure you have notes on that conversation. If you ever run across those notes and happen to remember me in connection with the point I would be grateful for a further report.

You mention M. L. Houser's reprint of the Scripps life with his notes, printed by E. J. Jacob of Peoria. I have that work and value it highly. If you do not know it I will say that there is a sort of a organization known as the Oakwood Lincoln Club, composed of some Iowa and Illinois Lincoln fans, and this club has been meeting at what Mr. Houser calls his "cabin in the woods," just east of the outskirts of Peoria in May of each year. This year we met there on May 26. Mr. Jacob is a member. He is a very fine printer and gets out a lot of Lincoln matter, mostly all "privately printed." Last year he brought to the meeting and distributed among us the "Second Inaugural," done in fine style. Hon. James W. Bollinger, of Davenport, Iowa, is a member of this club. If you are ever near Davenport I would say you should not fail to see his "Lincoln Room" in his house. He has a very fine collection there and takes pride in showing it to Lincoln lovers. Judge Bollinger is one of the most enthusiastic Lincoln fans I ever met. He is perhaps 66 or 67 years old but did not begin his Lincoln study until about ten or twelve years ago. There are three more Lincoln students at Davenport, Messrs. H. J. Lytle, C. M. Cochrane and James Chamberlin. All are devoted to the subject. Mr. Lytle is especially well informed on all Lincoln books, and is a very competent critic of them.

May I string along a little farther? If yes, did you ever get interested in Lincoln's assassination, especially the Booth question--whether or not he was killed at Garrett's place, or made his get-away and died many years afterward? If you have not and have the strength to tackle another book you

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might do some good along this line. The Booth hoax still lives and somebody with the literary skill ought to kill it--as dead as General Johnson's NRA dodo.

Until four years ago I had never read Finis L. Bates's book on the subject. At that time Bates had a disciple in this town, by name the Reverend Doctor John W. Potter, pastor of the M. E. church here, who delivered a lecture in his church in which he faithfully followed Bates in the latter's wild theories. I heard it and will say it was about the most slanderous thing one could imagine. Andrew Johnson was the mainspring behind Booth; planned the whole assassination scheme; arranged for the escape of the murderers--all so he could be president and help the South. It was the wildest exhibition of unrestrained slander I ever hear in public.

That lecture set me to hunting up some facts. In my hunt I found a letter the Reverend R. B. Garrett, son of the Garrett at whose place Booth is supposed to have been killed, written in 1907 to a gentleman in Memphis, Tenn., in which he told about the killing of Booth at his father's place. I got hold of the original letter and Judge Bellinger has had it photostated and preserved in permanent form. Have you ever seen this letter? If not and if interested I will try to put one in your hands. It is privately printed and only a very small number at that. I have but one copy but believe I could get you a copy if you should want one.

If you are at all interested in the Booth subject I believe I could furnish you with some strong points to use in whatever you might wish to get up. Will say I have been urged to go at it myself but am doubtful of ability as a writer. Francis Wilson came near to ending the hoax, but his work is so full of apologies for the Booth family, such as "sad, bad mad Johnnie," and all that rot.

Now, my good lady, let me again thank you for your letter. If you ever send me another please let it be signed by your own hand. I want it to put in your Life of Lincoln which I got as soon as it came out. And please do not consider me as trying to be "fresh" when I speak to you this way. I am an old gray headed grandfather myself.

Very respectfully yours.

A. J. Walsmith

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