Autobiography: McClures Magazine

Yesterday, April 3rd, ~~xxiked~~ I called on Dunhams 200 West 86th Street to see an illustrated life of Lincoln - very good. Mrs. D. was interested in knowing how I got my inspiration for ~~my~~ Life and I said quite truthfully I did not start out with an inspiration, I started out to do a job - quite a different thing. I talked too garrulously as always, to become an authority on the French Revolution. I did not tell them that back of that lay my search to find out what the women would be worth in public life and I settled on Madam Roland as a beginning at least of research. But this led me to a desire to know all about the French Revolution, to become as I say an authority. I came back to America with that notion and then that queer thing happened that I must tell about of knowing that I belonged here.

What happened when I stepped off the ship and got that impression. I did not touch on this, however, to the D's.

They spoke of Napoleon and here is something that should come in. The satisfaction I had in studying the man who had brought France back to order, the mental and spiritual distress that I felt in seeing Madam Roland dead by the guillotine - all her fine friends and fine ideas torn to tatters - headless, disorderly, hopeless country. The necessity of a strong hand. There was an intellectual and spiritual satisfaction to me in seeing them gathered up so that while they may call it a pot boiler, and it was I suppose a pot boiler, it was done with a degree of satisfaction, that only those who have had similar

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experiences can realize.

I was not even upset by Napoleon's death; he brought it on himself I felt, of course Madam Roland did, but he left behind him certain achievements of great value which are ordinarily over-looked to which a man in their contribution to the larger must be taken into consideration.

That is, I did have a part in Napoleon. It was not merely a pot boiler; it was logical enough, psychologically and intellectually that I should seize the opportunity. Raf. Merment in Paris - appeal on me.

And then I told them about Lincoln - the project to gather articles. And here I should put in what I over-looked at that time how easily I might really have gotten great things. Brunswick But how that passion for detail and for starting at the beginning of things, finding out what had been done ruled me. If I had gone away and carefully read anything and then tabulated the material - the men whose reports were not in make lists - and had persuaded them as Thorndyke Rice had to give up records I might have gotten many things that have come out since. That is, I might have done a fine useful piece of editorial work, but I began with scraps, intent on getting things that were not in any published source or ~~illustrated~~, also getting my own impressions - some of which were to come back to tease me, like the God-forsaken Southwestern Indiana.

Then these had to be put together. Here I should put in some paragraphs on McCann Davis and his work. And then, my feeling that if Mr. McClure by this time had not become so impressed with Lincoln as a magazine serial I think I should have gone on and written that life, that is I by this time had become interested in Lincoln, himself, quite apart from its relation to

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McClure's magazine. I never would have been satisfied not to have finished the story, any more than I would not have ~~xxxxx~~ been not- written ~~en~~ the next chapter after the Rue Re in the French Revolution.

It was the use of a tool of course ~~for~~ acquired in ~~xx~~ what little training I had. Certain things I knew how to do. I had gotten a certain method of collecting, classifying.

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