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AURORA, ILL., Feb. 19, 1923.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
New York City,

My Dear Miss Tarbell:

I have your note of February 15. I certainly have not forgotten our correspondence of two years ago, in regard to the Chicago River and Harbor Convention of 1847. I wrote a paper on the subject, and the paper was delivered at the annual meeting of the Illinois State Historical Society last May. Before that meeting came off I had written to the editor of the Atlantic Monthly, asking if he would care to consider for the Atlantic an article dealing with the matter. Mr. Sedgwick replied that what I told him about this Lincoln incident was "very interesting," but that they had a number of plans involving historical material, and could not extend them. He suggested that I communicate with Mr. S. S. McClure, of McClure's Magazine, "who is a great student of Lincolniana, and would certainly be interested in my idea."

In the mean time I received the invitation to make the talk before the Historical Society, and Mrs. Weber, the secretary of the Society, expressed a disinclination to have the paper appear in any magazine before it should be published in the Quarterly Journal of the Historical Society. In deference to her wishes, I made no further effort at publication. The Society is behind-hand one or two years with its Journal, so that the number containing what I call "A Neglected Episode in the Life of Abraham Lincoln" has not yet appeared.

Some time ago I was invited to give my paper to the Union League Club of Aurora on Lincoln's birth-day. The invitation was accepted. I made some changes in the paper that was given to the Historical Society, and put in some local material.

Now, answering your inquiry, I assure you I have no objection whatever to your using this incident in your proposed series. I have no rights of discovery in the matter. The incident was brought to my attention by Dr. B. J. Gigrand, a somewhat noted student of early Illinois history. He had the fact of the Convention, and Lincoln's presence in it, but not much more. I therefore instituted a search in our own library. In the Works of Daniel Webster, I first found the complete letter he wrote to the convention. In Horace Greeley's "Recollections of a Busy Life," I found a brief mention of the convention, but nothing about Lincoln. Horace, however, had a distinct recollection of the farewell speech of Edward Bates, president of the convention, and seemed to be quite carried away with it. You will remember that Bates was Greeley's candidate for the Republican nomination for President in the convention of 1860.

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In the Memoir of Thurlow Weed by his daughter I found a meagre account of the convention, but a foot-note stated that many of the letters that Mr. Weed wrote to his paper about the convention could be found in No. 18 of the "Fergus Historical Series." That started me on a hunt for the Fergus No. 18. I found it at last among a lot of out-of-print and second-hand books at McClurg's book-store. This gave a full account of the origin and the work of the Convention, including the official record of the proceedings, and much other matter about the convention of interest to the historical student.

There you have the whole story. Dr. Cigrand has written some newspaper articles about the convention. Mr. Seymour Curry, of Evanston, has told the story of the convention in his "History of Chicago." Rev. Dr. William E. Barton, of Oak Park, Illinois, whose "Soul of Abraham Lincoln" you are no doubt familiar with, has mentioned the convention in several addresses. Dr. Barton received his first knowledge of the gathering from me. These men have treated Lincoln's presence at the convention as an indication of his great interest in the growth and prosperity of Chicago. The view-point taken in my paper is that the convention marked a stage in the long struggle between conflicting theories of the rights and powers of the government under the constitution.

If you care to read my paper, I shall be glad to send it to you. In its present shape it makes about 4500 words. It may possibly give you some suggestion as to the manner in which the River and Harbor Convention may be treated.

Yours very truly,

James Shaw

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