HEADQUARTERS
GENERAL OF THE ARMIES
WASHINGTON

May 14, 1923.

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

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I have just returned from a visit to Mrs. Weber and other kinsfolk at Springfield and find your letter of May 11th.

I have no objection to your quoting from my letter of April 19th, but I am inclined to think that you will find a more effective reference for your purpose in General Pershing's speech of February 12, 1922, a copy of which I am enclosing. In this speech, beginning on page 5, he gives his views as to President Lincoln's grasp of the wider issues of the Civil War, and on page 7 he quotes two remarkable extracts from President Lincoln's letters to McClellan before and during the peninsula campaign. These are, in fact, the passages that I referred to as profound in my letter of April 19th.

I feel complimented that you should want to refer to my letter, but I believe that your tribute to Mr. Lincoln will have more weight as coming from General Pershing.

I found these passages for General Pershing when his speech was in preparation. I have always been impressed with their very great wisdom, and although I can not prove it I think the language bears evidence of a comparatively recent study of Clausewitz. I am quite sure that I have encountered the fact that he did study Clausewitz, but I have not been able to find the reference, although I have made a new search of Lieber since I received the hint from you. My impression is that somebody described encountering Lincoln one night during a very critical period, all alone, and reading the great German philosopher of war. The quoted paragraphs from the letters to McClellan, and particularly the paragraph which I have marked "C", are almost in the Clausewitzian cast of thought. I am also quite convinced that if the President did read Clausewitz he had a most decided

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advantage over McClellan because, while I can not prove it, I am convinced that McClellan never did read him.

I am making a further search in regard to this Clausewitz clue, and in the meantime if you should happen upon it I would appreciate it if you would give it to me. In the meantime I trust you will find what you are seeking in General Pershing's speech. I believe that you will find it interesting throughout and not merely in the marked paragraphs.

I still have about two or three weeks' work on my book if I am let alone, but I can never be sure of that.

With best wishes from all of us,

Sincerely yours,

John McA Palmer

P.S. Could it have been Washburne who came to the White House one evening and found Mr. Lincoln reading Clausewitz?

X Please note particularly what General Pershing says about the great simplicity of the plan of advancing directly on Manassas as compared with the complexity of the plan of trying to go around by way of the peninsula. This suggests the very heart of the Clausewitz theory, that is, the great problem of military leadership is in the domain of character, courage, resolution and morale, and not in the purely intellectual domain. The simplest and most direct path to the enemy is the one chosen by really great commanders like Caesar, Napoleon and Grant. Inferior commanders seek to evade this terrible responsibility by more elaborate plans. General Pershing calls attention to this when he introduces the subject, and coming from him it is particularly impressive. In the last quotation from Lincoln's letters you will find how thoroughly he grasped this idea, and how he saw that there could be no victory except through risking battle.

If you have not read Clausewitz, I will say that in his great book, "Das Krieg," he studied war as a phenomenon of human nature. He was concerned with the permanent, everlasting characteristics of war, and not with its changing superficial methods on account of changing equipment. What he did say

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about war was equally applicable to Hannibal's day or McClellan's day. McClellan was absorbed in the tremendous detail of organization and equipment. Lincoln looked through all of this outside husk into the very heart of the matter; and, so far as I know, Clausewitz' book is the only medium through which he could have found this outlook.

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