ELDORADO, ILLINOIS

July 14, 1941

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

My dear Miss Tarbell:

It probably isn't a bit unusual for you to receive scores of letters from people who love the name of Abraham Lincoln, and pay tribute to your masterful works on Lincoln. But, I daresay that there is not a one who has written you throughout the years--whose life has felt the influence of Mr. Lincoln--ever since childhood--more than the writer. When I was very very young--the first stories I heard about him--his life completely captured my imagination. This has stayed with me throughout the years.

I have always been too poor to own a Lincoln collection--but my love and profound interest in his life--has caused me to get other material concerning him. Like these; Mr. Gutzon Borglum sent me a miniature head of Lincoln; Mr. Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith sent me the following greetings, "Best of luck in your fine work, ROBERT TODD LINCOLN BECKWITH". Custodian Fay of the Lincoln tomb, gave me a small piece of wood taken from the original floor of the Lincoln home. I met and talked with the Hon. Edward D. Keys of Springfield, in 1931, who married the niece of Mrs. Lincoln, and who as a nine year old boy lived near the Lincoln home and went to school with two of the Lincoln children. He was present at the Old Wasbash station when Lincoln made his farewell address and was also present at the funeral. I also have in my files, a letter from one Smith Stimmel, who was President Lincoln's bodyguard from 1863 to 1865. Another letter from Mr. T. H. Earnest of Springfield, who wrote me, at the time, that he was almost 92 years old--that he was not personally acquainted with Mr. Lincoln--but knew him by sight. People recognize sincere admiration and respect it. Many people--among collectors--let their interest in Lincoln be influenced by financial gain. People who would genuinely cherish even a little item connected with his life--are often too poor--like myself--to even own his signature --much less a letter written by him.

The world will always owe you a great debt of gratitude--Miss Tarbell, for your years of painstaking research and delving into every reliable source that would throw true light on the life of Lincoln--of whom you are the greatest living authority.

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No greater monument could be left to your memory--than the results of your years of loving labor--left for countless generations to read and enjoy. Personally--I want to express to you my deep and sincere gratitude for bringing Abraham Lincoln nearer in my life and making him and his memory all the dearer to me. You will realize my sincere admiration for him--when I tell you that our only child is named Lincoln.

Miss Tarbell, I would like very much to have a lasting keep-sake in memory of you--for my studio and study--here in the heart of the coalfields. Do you have a large copy of your photograph available--that you might autograph to me--with some sentiment about Lincoln--in your own chirography. I would treasure it always! Any other item--that you would like one of the sincerest admirers of Abraham Lincoln ever born--to have as a momento--of a great life and his great biographer--I would be very grateful to receive.

I do not write you as a curiosity-seeker,--but I have been honest and sincere in my statements to you--of which I hope that you are convinced.

With best wishes for your continued health and wishing for you long life with all the blessings of our Creator, I am

Your fellow Lincoln admirer,

Rachel Davis

'coal miner artist'
Minartis Studio
Eldorado, Illinois

encl/ clipping

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