December 17, 1923

Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock,
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock:

Now, don't get excited about Brother Barton's book. Neither you nor I would want to gather together and publish all of the gossip that he has, but, remember, dear Mrs. Hitchcock, that all of these tales are told in one or another part of the country today. They are repeated over and over and people hearing them for the first time are inclined to accept them. It is amazing what capacity people have for believing a scandal, though it may come to them without a shadow of proof.

What Barton has done is to gather first hand these outrageous stories and to disprove them all. He has really shown how unsubstantial a foundation they have. I am inclined to think that repellant as I find the book, it serves its purpose. What he has put down here is something that is on men's tongues and what those who love and honor Mr. Lincoln and his mother must contend with. And you really can contend more effectively with it if itis down in black and white as Barton has put it than you can when it is floating around in the air. Every now and then I get a letter from some distressed person who has for the first time heard one or anoth of these tales, and I can say today, Now, go and read Mr. Barton's book and you will find he has utterly disproved this yarn.

As for Mr Barton's raking up all of the unpleasant detail of Lincoln's early life, of his repeating old insinuations, etc.,etc that is far from my taste, but here again, you are getting the worst that has been said, set down, emphasized; and the fact of having it in that form is, I rather think, dear Mrs. Hitchcock, to make one feel that, after all, it is merely gossip and not worth troubling about.

I think the last thing that lovers of Lincoln need be worried about is this book. That is my real judgment. It is a compilation of scandal and gossip. Its usefulness lies in that you have everything of that kind under one cover, and when you get through it all, and give it all value that you possibly can, what does it amount to? Nothing, only that ignorant, malicious and idle people have gossiped about a great man, of a real character and life they were unable to have any appreciation of. Don't worry over it, dear Mrs. Hitchcock. Let Mr. Barton go on in his own way. It is not the way that I like or that you like, and some day when all his documents are out and he rests his case - you know, he has his "great life" still

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to come! - if I am still in harness, I think I will take it all up and set down what I think it amounts to.

You know, the one thing that would do more to settle scandal than anything else would be a complete Hanks genealogy - something absolutely sure, as the Lincoln genealogy now is. I do not know of course what you have, but if you could see your way to complete that you would make a great contribution. Think about it., In the meantime, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and don t let Barton disturb your peace of mind.

Sincerely yours,

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