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May 26, 1923

Mr. Paul U. Kellogg,
The Survey, 112 East 19 Street.

Dear Mr. Kellogg:

Please don't set me down as ungracious because I have not before this answered your letter of May 15. It is most stimulating to have some one rise so quickly to the ideas which are my driving power in the rather long and detailed piece of Lincoln work which I am now doing - ideas which, as I see them, logically enough produced Lincoln.

I suppose it is the result of my experience in historical and economic journalism that interpretation without laborious marshalling of facts never satisfies me. That is, I would have to do what I am doing before I could think of doing what you want, and what I should like mightily to do if I could make it satisfactory to The Survey.

I am not sure about the edge being taken off of my notions by putting off the writing of the articles you have in mind. As a matter of fact, I believe I would do it better a year from now than I could do it at present. Possibly I think that because it is absolutely out of the question for me to do it now, dear Mr. Kellogg. Here is my actual situation. I have undertaken to produce 4,000 words a week for this Moloch of a syndicate - I who have always leisurely done my 6,000 a month! And I assure you that what I am doing is not a mere rehashing of what I did twenty-five years ago. A lot of Lincoln water has run under the bridge since I did my Life of Lincoln, and I find it full of oxygen. It is going to keep me hustling, however, for the rest of the year to carry the work through. You see, the series will not be complete until February of next year; the book that is to appear in the fall is made up of the first half only.

I am still inhibited by the weight of work - dare not promise to give you what you have laid out so admirably and what I really itch to do, by any fixed time. That is not saying but what a little later I may see my way clear - possibly when I come to read the proofs of the first half which comes out in October, I may grab my pen and do part of the thing, at least. I shall surely do it along the lines you havelaid down.

As to the price, that is all right.

This must be very unsatisfactory, dear Mr. Kellogg, but it will show that I am doing just what you ask in your last paragraph - keeping my mind open until I have a little more elbow room.

Sincerely yours,