

JOSEPH BENJAMIN OAKLEAF
MOLINE, ILLINOIS

June 15th, 1925.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
#120 - East 19th Street,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:-

I have, for acknowledgment, this morning, your Review of Barton's Life of Lincoln in the Monitor for May 2nd, and you cannot know how pleased I was to get it, for really I have been wanting to hear from you on the subject, and I have ordered twenty copies of the number, as I want to send them around to some of my friends, who are interested.

Well, Dr. Barton is home. He landed in Boston a week ago and he now has my letter, wherein I stated, "I am sorry that you did not have an opportunity to read proof of your Life of Lincoln, for then you would have caught some errors that have been allowed to slip through."

You know, I had intended to insert in my Bibliography his portrait, together with a sketch of his life, but really and truly, I do not know whether I was hypnotized or not to make the suggestion to him, but I did when I was in a state of "Giving", and the next day I regretted it but I did not know just how in the mischief I was to get out of it then, so I allowed him to send me his photograph and a long sketch of his life, which is very readable and very pleasant but did not belong to my Bibliography, and then some of my friends, whom I talked to, heard about it and they just sat right down on me with both feet, and I may add that I was willing to be sat on, so I decided to keep him out just as quickly as I had decided to put him in, but had more reasons for deciding to keep him out than I had for putting him in.

I wrote him in May and he had the letter waiting for him when he reached home that circumstances, over which I really had no control, compelled me to omit his portrait and the sketch of his life and "A large number of people with whom I had communicated from time to time concerning the work, stated that I was making a mistake for, if I put Barton in, I should put in Stephenson, Tarbell and Weik, who are now living, and all of the leading biographers who are dead and, therefore, I was compelled to omit putting in your portrait and a sketch of your life."

You see, Miss Tarbell, I had been very close to Dr. Barton and had been up to his home several times; had consulted with him and he had been a guest of mine several times and we have had a great deal of correspondence with each other and that is how I came to make the fatal step. I have enough portraits in the Bibliography as it is, and even my son criticized me for putting in so many portraits: For instance, I have that of Mr. Rankin, who writes the Foreword, a contemporary of Lincoln. (I love the old man and find a great pleasure in visiting with him at his home. I suppose that you too have visited him and know of his condition - that he has been an invalid for forty-four years, but his mind is as bright as a dollar); then there is a portrait of each of the Big Five, who are the leading collectors and a sketch of their respective lives; then I have a portrait of the first monument erected to the memory of Lincoln and which was taken down and reerected in Washington and then I have a cut of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. This matter all precedes the Bibliography proper and then, scattered throughout the Bibliography, I have the six portraits of Lincoln, together with the Meserve text and the compiler's text concerning each; then I also have some historical matter preceding the Bibliography proper, so you see, if I had put in Barton, I would be censored by your friends for not putting you in and then I would be censored by the friends of Stephenson for not putting him in, for really, I think Stephenson's life is a wonderful thing: It is a master-piece to my mind, and then there is Weik - why not him? So you see that my Bibliography would be just a picture gallery instead of a Bibliography. Men, whose opinions I value very highly, have made very favorable comment on the way I have arranged the Bibliography; so now you have the story of the Bibliography.

Now, back to your Review. You have given a most excellent and scholarly review and which is in accordance with the views of a score or more people, who have written me. One man, whose opinion I value very highly, said "All that Barton has that is interesting can be found in the first hundred pages of Volume One - the balance is just preaching." Really, Miss Tarbell, I think you have been very charitable with Dr. Barton in placing him in the second class and, if he had written only one volume, it surely would have stood at the head of the second class, but you will note that he ran out of material for the second volume and then he had to "pad" and lifted bodily from Lambert concerning the Gettysburg Address, which resulted in a number of pages that do not interest anyone particularly, for he could have confined his remarks on the Gettysburg Address to five pages and he would have made good on that point; but you will note in the second volume how he has lifted bodily from other works, although in there he has put in his own preachments, so as to not make it plagiarism.

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Well, I don't know but I might keep on like this for a day, but I want you to accept my sincere thanks for your very excellent review of Barton's Life of Lincoln.

Yours most cordially.

JOSEPH BENJAMIN OAKLEAF.



JBO/h

P.S.

The Bibliography will be out in July.

What gets me is that some of my Christian Science friends, who send me copies of the Monitor whenever it contains anything about Lincoln, have missed sending me the copy containing your Review.

Idem.