Eugene E. Prussing
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1717 GARFIELD PLACE
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June 22. 1929.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

The enclosed documents will tell you something of the kind of work I am interested in.

Fifteen years ago, when I first began my study of the Estate of George Washington, Deceased, I was challenged by the statement made by an unreconstructed rebel, "Abe Lincoln was a grafter. He left over $100.000, yet he was a poor man when he went to Washington and his salary was less than that sum. Where did he get his expenses and the surplus? Why don't you write about that?"

I promised to do so. When I began to gather my material for this about three years ago, I found you had "beat me to it" — almost.

Nevertheless I kept on and this year I shall finish the study when I go East in September. I have photostatic copies of his Estate files, and the estate of Mrs. Lincoln while she was under Conservatorship in the County Court at Chicago, also a number of her letters and Robert T. Lincoln's.

I was born in Chicago, lived there until recently, knew Robert T. Lincoln well and saw Mrs. Lincoln frequently. I also saw Mr. Lincoln in his Office twice.

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

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Your story, down to the end of the second paragraph in the middle of page 76 (Sept. No. 1923 of The American Magazine) is excellent. I should like to reprint it as part of the whole story; it will save me "a heap o' Chasin'."

But, I think you will admit that after that, it breaks down. Your theory that Mr. Lincoln's real estate or Mrs. Lincoln's $22,025.34 received from the Government, went to swell the amount of his estate is untenable. The administrator in Illinois has nothing to do with real estate unless he is called upon to pay debts, which, of course was not the case here.

Mrs. Lincoln got the Government money, & she paid her debts to A.T. Stewart & Co. and other merchants with it. Later she inherited two thirds of her son Thomas' estate and this accounts for the more than $50,000 she had at her death.

Your comment that the inventory of Mr Lincoln's estate by Judge Davis is "indefinite and incomplete," as you perhaps have learned since, shows an unfamiliarity with legal forms. Because his certificate that it contains all, "so far as the same has come to my knowledge" is the legal reservation of the right (and duty) to make supplemental inventories of newly discovered estate.

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as so often happens. The first inventory must be filed within sixty days and often is followed by others.

What do you say to a combined story or a collaboration? If you have any more material, I can work it over, add the records and the results of my search in Illinois and Washington and our reflections. I have a publisher who would "grab it"

Last February The American Magazine told the story of my books about Washington. May I have your reaction, as the literary people love to say?

Yours faithfully
Eugene E. Prussing.

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

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