

Auburn, California,
October Fifteenth,
1 9 2 0 .

Dear Miss Tarbell:

In the latest "Outlook" I came across an 'inspired' symposium of literary people upon the question of Presidential candidates. The publishers disclaimed any effort at rigging the market, yet it seems to me that some subconscious impulse lent them divine guidance. At least Dr. Abbott would consider it divine, so deliciously ingenuous is he.

I was delighted with Tarkington's noncommittal attitude. And with your statement I was more than delighted. It was just what I should have expected of you. For years you have been a favorite in this household. My acquaintance with you began on a stormy Saturday afternoon up in the--not ^{quite} in the garret, that romantic Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Mark Twain realm--but in My father's upstairs room and library, where he introduced me to a paper bound magazine folio of McClure imprint with glorious pictures and a fascinating story of "Napoleon." How I devoured it that gray afternoon. Sunshine would have called me out-doors. The gray skies cozily curtained my proscenium, where the drama of Napoleon and his marshals passed before me. It was the kind of an afternoon whose rare gusto the budding 'literary man' of twelve can't exactly communicate to others. But he prizes it, and it becomes a grateful memory and a guide post for him.

However, it was a guidepost that I didn't follow very faithfully. Sports called me off, and I was launched on baseball as a profession, when an unlucky slide to first put a permanent crimp in my athletic enterprises. My young Polish and Bohemian team mates

were mighty good to me in that dark time; and the memory of all that bitter-sweetness has trailed me from Detroit and the dear old times to a new home and days in California.

Here I had no resource except reading. And here I came on your Life of Lincoln. I read it aloud to my mother. Was there ever anything we enjoyed quite as much? Nothing, I guess, unless some things of George W. Cable, William Dean Howells and Tarkington. That story of Lincoln kept us company for one happy and inspiring month of days and became a part of our lives. Many is the time we refer to it; and I, alone, have re-read it.

Then came your writings in The American. I began to make a dab at writing then, and one of my real encouragements was a friendly note from John Philips commending an article "They Ask For Bread" sent my Slavic friends which I had sent The American and which failed to find a place. The editors couldn't make use of it, but had been pleased with certain parts and were generous and kind enough to let me know. That was a highly prized letter, I kept it for years. And I continued for years to write about my Polish folks in Detroit. I failed with one novel, and began another, on which I worked during the war. Doran has accepted this for Spring publication, and I should like to have them send you a copy if you would care to have one. I should like to give Mr. Philips one too, if I knew where he might be found. And Mr. Baker.

Among my mother's cherished things is a color reproduction of you in your garden among some pink hollyhocks, taken it was from an American. And another is a "Country Life In America" with pictures of your beautiful home in Connecticut. Believe me,

Always gratefully yours,

Harold Walden

*The Outlook
kindly affords
me your
address*