

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FENWAY BOSTON

January 24, 1929.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
Knox College,
Galesburg, Illinois.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I find your letter of January 21 on my return from the West. I shall be very happy to send you what we have printed on the Lincoln letters. It will take me three or four days to get up the material, as it has been buried in the accumulation of a month's absence.

There has arisen another point on which I should like such information from you as you can give. In making an examination of Lincoln letters while working on Senator Beveridge's volume I read the so-called Lincoln-Stephens letters printed by Judd Stewart and by Tracy. The contents of the letters struck me as so markedly different from anything that Lincoln was writing at the time that I questioned their authenticity. After finishing the volume I amused myself by looking into the question, and I send you the result in the form of the Massachusetts Historical Society's Serial.

While in the West I saw for the first time your volume on Lincoln in youth, and upon opening it my eye fell upon certain "tracings" of Henry Whitney Cleveland relating to the marriage of Lincoln's forbears. Anything that came from that man would be open to suspicion, and what you print in facsimile

Miss I. M. Tarbell, Jan. 24/29.

are clearly not "tracings." If you make the experiment of tracing you will find that it is extremely difficult to follow the lines of the original, and there is a shakiness in the tracing that at once indicates its true character. In your facsimiles there is no such shakiness. May I ask you where you came into connection with Cleveland? Have you his original "tracings", which I should like to see? And is he still living; and if so, what is his address? Naturally I was extremely disappointed in finding the reference to him in your volumes, because I thought I had covered the ground pretty thoroughly, but was misled in the belief that he was the son or some relation of the Henry Cleveland who was Stephens' biographer. Again we are against a question where all of the indications point to manufacture of documents, but I want to be a little more certain of my ground and particularly of your relations with Cleveland before I go further into it. In these days the way of the investigator is made hard by the performances of these volunteer historians who will not hesitate to manufacture what they believe their subject calls for.

Sincerely yours,

Northrup W. C. Ford
