March 17, 1934

My dear Mr. Hauser:

Thank you for your letter. I am only too pleased if I am able to contribute anything to your valuable undertaking.

What you say about running across ideas and expressions in books that Lincoln read or studied which you had supposed was original with him is interesting. My own judgment about all men's writings is that they are built more or less unconsciously, generally more, on their studying and reading, the the originality of the thing comes in the application at the vital moment. Various men have expressed the same idea as Mr. Lincoln did in the Gettysburg speech, "government of the people, by the people, for the people." In some cases almost the same words, but the genius of the thing was realizing that the Gettysburgh field was the time and the place to express that idea. The way it fits into the speech perfects the idea as it never was before.

It is very fascinating tracing down the origin of some of these expressions of his which have found so large a place in our current thinking.

I have been recently having a correspondence with a Lincoln student about the origin of the sentence so often attributed to Lincoln, "you can fool some of the people all of the time, etc." Have you anything to contribute on the origin?

When I can get out into Illinois I am going to ask you to let me come down and look at your shelf of books that Lincoln read.

Digital Images, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

If I can be of the least service at any time please let me know.

Very sincerely yours

P.S. I have just opened the second Volume of my Life of Lincoln and find corroboration of the fact that Lincoln read "Phoenixiana." It is from an account of Governor Oglesby's interview with Lincoln on the last days of his life. Lincoln, Governor Oglesby said, got to reading some humorous books. I think one was by John Phoenix. One of these days when I have time I shall look up that interview.

Mr. M. L. Hauser
Peoria, Illinois

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