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NEW YORK, Jan. 4, 1900.

My dear Mr. Barrett:

Thank you for your kind letter of Jan. 1. When Mc Clure's Magazine first announced the article on Nancy Hanks I expected to be at liberty to do it at once, but since that time I have had an illness which has kept me away from my desk for five or six weeks, and I find I am going to be delayed a good deal in getting my material together. I hope, however, to do the article very soon. I, of course, know your Life of Lincoln very well and know what a good purpose it has served in its day. It is a pleasure to me to know that you are interested at all in anything that I may be able to do on the subject.

I have a good deal of material on Nancy Hanks and her family. I know very thoroughly all the various traditions concerning her origin. The only theory advanced which has any sort of documentary proof to support it is that of Mrs. Hitchcock. Mr. Herndon certainly never repeated anything more than hearsay. I appreciate thoroughly the value of the great work that Mr. Herndon did, and I do not question for a moment his honesty in his beliefs, but I think him rather too quick to accept a sensational explanation of certain points. It seems to me the discovery of this will by Mrs. Hitchcock amounts to much more than any number of traditions. These brothers and sisters of Nancy Hanks recognized in the will are certainly the people who claim to be the brothers and sisters of Nancy Hanks*; their descendants claim to be his nephews, nieces and cousins. I hope when I come to gather all my data to make out a pretty good case. I have no hope of convincing anybody; I simply hope to give the only account of Nancy Hanks which has any sort of documentary support.

May I ask, my dear Mr. Barrett, that when I have completed my story you will read the manuscript. If there are any weak points in it I should like to have them criticised. I want to be perfectly fair to everybody concerned, but I decidedly object to keeping up this old tradition of the illegitimacy of Nancy Hanks simply for the sake of adding more mystery to the origin of Abraham Lincoln.

Very sincerely yours,

Ida M. Tarbell

* Who married Thomas Lincoln

Joseph H. Barrett, Esq.,

Loveland, O.

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Lincoln

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Letter M. Tarbell
Jan. 4, 1900.