

Samuel Magnus Hills five letters to Selma Lagerlöf
Letter 1
Luther Academy Wahoo, Neb. November 16, 1901

Selma Lagerlöf, Author Honored compatriot!

In my lecture in Uppsala I took the liberty to interject a greeting to you, that you, during your next tour of study, come visit your compatriots in the United States. Two celebrated men from Sweden are currently traveling around the country and are received with great kindness everywhere, yes, even with delight. I think that a well organized tour for a celebrated author would be just as successful. I believe that the Presidents of our universities and colleges, as well as our newspapers, will do everything they can to make such a tour possible. And I also believe that you, as an author, would find a much more rewarding and richer field of study here than either Palestine or Egypt. Therefore, be welcome to the United States! One of your delighted readers, S. M. Hill

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Letter 2
Luther Academy Wahoo, Nebraska, February 4, 1902

Miss Selma Lagerlöf Falun, Sweden God's peace!

Thank you very much for your letter! During my stay in Stockholm I obtained reprints from Walström & Widstrand's ...[unreadable], about thirty of Sweden's more contemporary authors which we intend to introduce as a series in our magazine for young people. I have texts and images, reviews and some biographical data. I also have Hasse Tullberg's Författare [Authors]. I would be deeply grateful if you could oblige me, as a favor to our Swedish-American youth, by sending some information about your home in Värmland, and how you had the idea of writing Gösta Berling's Saga. Your most recent book, Jerusalem i Dalarna, I have already ordered. Yours very truly, (PTO!) Samuel M. Hill

P.S. The school teacher Lundahl in Lund is also working on a reader for the elementary school system. Is that the one you are busy working on? He has requested that ...[unreadable] Svensk-amerikanerna [The Swedish-Americans] by Dr. Gustave Andreen in Rock Island. In this country we teach grammar according to the so called diagramming method. We break the sentences apart and divide the different components into lines in different directions

He | went The lamp | stands
rather quickly on the table

If there is no textbook employing a method like this, I would be willing to prepare one based on, for example, Sandin's Grammatiken [Grammar]. It makes the learning of grammar so much easier. You could have your publisher release it. If it were to be the first one, it would probably make a nice profit. Yours respectfully S. M. Hill

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Letter 3
Luther Academy Nebr, March 2, 1903

Selma Lagerlöf, Author, Falun

I thought, that I could obtain your portrait for my series of articles without having to bother you about it; but since the one I have is not suited for reproduction, which is quite obvious, I must ask for your kindness to send me one for this purpose. The Saga of Gösta Berling och Jerusalem are currently serialized in Swedish newspapers here, so our readers are likely to become acquainted with your writings. The account of how Gösta Berling came into being, which you so kindly promised to send, has not arrived. Perhaps the publisher forgot about it. I would be exceedingly grateful, if I could have it. If I could also have a greeting from you personally to the young Swedish-America, it would be a great pleasure to us. I am currently negotiating with Jac. Ahrenberg, the Editor of Hufvudstadsbladet [Capitol City News] in Finland, to have their contribution. Swedes ought to get to know each other no matter where they live. I believe that even the crop failure in Norrland [northern Sweden] has played a part in us getting to know each other. Have you made plans for your next book yet? Will it be about the Swedes in the West? The Jansenism [movement] in northern Sweden could serve as a starting point. There is a fairly substantial body of material to draw from. Erik Jansson's son lives here in town. Trial documents and records from the church, as well as information from relatives still living in Sweden could provide ideas for something splendid, especially by your pen. If you would like, I could send you a couple of pamphlets about it. In writing this, I have not in the slightest wanted to dictate, of course. But naturally I am very interested, "and of the things that fill one's heart, one's mouth will speak." An account of our countrymen here, sympathetically written, would unite us and considerably strengthen our Swedish identity here. And you have the ears of the Swedes like no one else. I gave my wife a copy of Jerusalem as a Christmas present, and it was read here with great delight. Thank you for that book!
Courteously Samuel M. Hill

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Letter 4
Luther Academy Wahoo, Neb, July 4, 1903

Author Selma Lagerlöf

Thank you so much for the portrait and the book. Working from it I hope that I will be able ... [unreadable] to provide the readers of Ungdomsvännan [Friends of Youth] with a simple and concise account of Sweden's most popular author and her most distinguished work—The Saga of Gösta Berling and Jerusalem are currently being serialized in [?] several Swedish-American newspapers. Yours very truly, Samuel M Hill

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Letter 5
Luther Academy Wahoo, Nebr. USA December 3, 1908

To the author Selma Lagerlöf, Falun, Sverige

I would like to send you the very best wishes from the Far West on the occasion of the half-mile marker on life's road, the fiftieth year. I suppose this arrives rather post festam, since we did not learn about this day until the Swedish-American newspapers wrote about the many tributes paid to you. Our ten-year-old son, Vincent, would also like to send his congratulations. Last summer he received a copy of

Nils Holgersson, and he did not stop [reading] until he had come all the way to the end. It is now being published in New York, presumably with your permission. Now, with your superb description of the colony in Jerusalem, you have shown the public that reality suits your pen just as well as a saga, and I have further evidence that you ought to take my advice and also portray the Swedish-Americans. In addition, the thought has emerged through minister Lagercrantz, that closer ties ought to be established between us, and for that purpose a sympathetic and brilliant portrayal of the compatriots who have moved here could contribute more than anything else. I am convinced that consul general A. E. Johnson in New York would provide free travel. Furthermore, I do not think that it would be difficult at all to travel around incognito for a full year, and through lectures at youth organizations as well as through stays at the Swedish-American universities and colleges, both get to know us and help our youth to get to know Sweden. And I believe that I can safely assure you, that when you arrive, homes will everywhere open their doors for you. Fairy-tale adventures, amazing hardships and similar subject matters, all suitable for novels, I also believe that you will be able to gather. Because it goes without saying that we have adventurers among us. There is one discovery that you will probably make: Sometimes criminals will come among strangers and start a new life and honor themselves and their people. I personally know of a few such cases, and there must surely be lots of them. If you do decide to come, it would be a great pleasure to assist you in your work in any way possible. For the pleasure you have afforded us through your writings, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude.

Respectfully, yours very truly S. M. Hill