My Dear Family:

I am perched on the side of a big rock overlooking the ocean. The tide is in and at the foot of my rocks where the waves are dashing and to the right on the beach there are a score of youngsters who are doing their best to wet what few clothes they have on or to wear out their breeches by sliding down the rocks. It is great fun to watch them. I would give all my small possessions to have Esther and Clara and Scott here and see them maneuver. I have taken a solemn vow that if ever I'm a even well-to-do woman to bring you all out here for a summer. It is certainly one of the most interesting places on the globe and I'm getting a note book full of stuff on it. I think I did not tell you how we got here. You know we were hunting for a cheap, quiet place "outside the usual lines of tourists" away from the crowd where one could live in one very plain flannel dress and all that sort of thing. We spent 5 days of our ten in the Island. I wrote you why we didn't stay at Moat San Midial and also why we moved on from San Malo. We had only one place selected here though we had the names of a number of hotels. Mr. V. and Mr. E. went out in a cab to find something. The rest of us sat around on the dock and stared at the 50 boats and wondered if we should spend the rest of our vacation hunting for that "tranquil" spot. For my part I was beginning to think no such place existed and to feel as if we would better go on to America.
since we were getting so far in that direction. After an hour of sitting around and gibing each other on the folly of starting on an excursion without knowing where we were going, we saw our reconnoiterers returning with beaming faces. They brought the startling information that they had rented a house and hired two women and that we were to keep house. Mr. Hazen asked if there was a Jersey cow and a horse and carriage included and said he thought we ought to insist on that too. It turned out as they had said though I didn't believe but that they were deceiving us until the last moment. We were to get supper in town they said as we our house was not yet in shape. About 9 o'clock we got out to the place and to my utter amazement we were conducted into a swell red stone house with balconies, dormer windows and all that sort of thing. We were introduced into a pretty salon full of comfortable things and decorated with beautiful cut flowers. The housekeeper appeared, a French woman with who talks perfect English. They rent the house and let their rooms to parties usually for long terms, fortunately for us their rooms were vacant for just the time we wanted. They do the work and give us the place for $15.00 for the week. We board cooperatively, they doing the buying. It costs less than $5.00 a day. We are living "just like home" and it almost brings tears to my eyes when I think of it and the narrow little rooms and solitary meals I'm going back to in Paris next week. We have had great fun here. Sunday I kept quiet and staid in. Monday we made an all day excursion walking about ten miles to the one end of the island. I'm going to write a letter next month to the Dispatch on the place so I shall not tell you all I saw. It is the tidiest
 clearest little kingdom one ever saw. The people are farmers
mainly and such fruit and vegetables you never saw. They
raise a "cow cabbage" here which grows 10 feet tall and they make
sticks (you must not say canes if you wish to be proper over here).
I have bought one to carry home. They cost me 18 cents. English
is talked on the island as well as French and it seems queer
enough to hear the farmer in the streets after so much of Paris.
The children speak both as both are taught in all the schools.
You never saw better behaved children, so polite. It is always
"please" if they don't understand what you say. A pretty habit
which I like better than the French way of saying "pardon"
when you don't understand. We've not jaunted about so very
much as we all have worked forenoons. I succeeded in having a
downright adventure the other day, however, in spite of our quiet
ways. We all went out to walk on the sand and Mr. Hazen and I
took to the rocks to hunt sea-anemones. There is a very long
ledge of sharp ugly rocks running for a half mile out from the beach
near our house. We had gone out nearly a quarter of a mile and had
become interested in closing up the tiny barnacles which close cover
the rocks. We were both of us hard at work and not noticing anything.
Suddenly I heard Mr. H. cry out excitedly "Great Caesar, Miss T.
The tide is surrounding us." I was up in a twinkle and there we
were, nearly a quarter of a mile from the sand and with a half dozen
rivers of water flowing over the shallow rocks and we cutting us
off. It was coming in with a rush, every instant making it deeper
and broader. Mr. H. proposed to take me on his back but as he is
very short, I concluded my own legs were worth more than his.
There was nothing to do but wade and I picked up my petticoats and went in. We waded six of those streams between the high rocks. The last was nearly to my waist and so strong a current I doubt if I could have stood on my feet alone. You can imagine our condition. We didn't catch cold--one never does with salt water they say--but it is such a joke on me, I pose as the chaperon, you know. If you see Jo please read this adventure to her. She'll enjoy it, I know.

Sunday. I find it difficult to work here or write letters. Every afternoon we make an excursion and evenings it is too lovely to do anything. This morning we went to service in the village church. It is all Episcopal here. The garrison of British soldiers stationed here was out, as pretty a sight as I ever saw. The men wear scarlet coats. It is a beautiful uniform and the men are much more manly than the French soldiers. The fort here is very fine, cost $5,000,000 and is kept up by England. This little place has its own militia but no military tax for the mainland. Indeed it is almost independent of England. I would give anything to have father and Mother to walk around the place. Father would be delighted with the roads, the Jersey cows, etc., Mother with the flowers. Freesias grow here as big as blackberry bushes. They train them over the walls and up on the porches. You sometimes see hedges of them, such brilliant beautiful things. I saw one the other day trained over a door top making a complete frame work and one mass of red and white bloom. The carnations, too, are finer than ordinary. All the houses have the tiny English gardens crowded with flowers. Each house has its own name no matter how small it is. There are hosts of British
officers, retired, here and rest many French political refugees. Boulanger was here a long time and left a splendid record for kindness. Victor Hugo was here. There are also many Jesuits.

The Jersey cow flourishes, of course. They milk her queerly. She is always tied in the fields. The milking is done into a big tin or brass jug. On one side of which is stamped the Jersey coats of arms. Over the top they put a piece of thin cloth which serves as a strainer. The milk is then strained as milked. Things to eat are perfectly delicious. Of course there is good fish and lobster. We had a queer fish the other day with bright green bones. It has a long bony snipe mouth. They also have a queer vegetable here called vegetable marrow which resembles a summer squash.

They are like Americans in regard to Sunday, go to church, shut up the shops, have dinner at 2 p.m. There is a delegation of the Salvation Army here and many meetings are held in the open air. One thing you may be surprised at. I believe you'll see more drunken men in a week here than in all Paris in two weeks. The French know how to use wine. We Anglo Saxons don't. They drink it -- we guzzle it.

We leave in the morning and get to Paris Tuesday morning. I am sorry to go but glad to get to work. It is a sad going for me for it means the breaking up of our pleasant crowd. Mr. Hazen left Friday morning and is now on the ocean going to America. He is a dear boy and I hated dreadfully to see him go. We have had him in our crowd since last November. The E's go on to Switzerland next week. The V's stay a week in Paris. I shall not try to make any more friends. It is too dreadfully to have to part from them.
Then, too, I'm going to be too busy. I must get a better paying
amount of work now before everything else! I think my new connection
with McClure means that I can do it. If I can I'm "fixed" I think
to do perhaps two good pieces of magazine work a year and lay in
stock for future work.

I received Mother's letter of July since I came here.
I'm so thankful Ella is sitting up. What a blessed relief it must
be to the poor girl to see herself once more off the pillow. Do
make her be careful. I wish I had Sara over here. I believe
she'd get well. When I come back after the World's Fair she must
come.

I wish you'd ask Jo H. why she don't write me. I've
had just one letter--sent from the steamer -- since she came left.
I've written her two letters and two postals. I've heard just once
also from Mary Henry. She wrote her mother was very miserable
and seemed somewhat discouraged. I think her position is secure,
however. I wish if anything unusual happens at Chautauqua you'd let
me know. If you happen to have a program won't you send it on.
I want to know what they are doing there.

Don't forget to tell me the congressional fun. I hope
Will won't bother with the dirty business. I'm amazed that Mr.
Miller (or is it Sibley) has gone in. I would not be surprised
if he had a personal grudge! You know they were friends of Belle
McClintock's. Still I don't believe anything can knock the Dr.
out when his mind is made up.

Goodbye, dear, dear folk. I get into an awful
sentimental and tearful condition when I think of you. Times may be
awful hard with you, they must be. You have had a tough trial with poor Ella's long sickness but you are all there and you have each other and yewm our pleasant home and if you knew just how desirable that all seems from so far away, you would forgive me for "stooping over" a bit now and then in my letters. I can't help it today for this week the last of my crowd goes. I'm nothing but a mutilated "trunk" so many limbs have been lopped off since Jo and Mary left. By the way, it is a year ago next Wednesday, Aug. 30, since I left home, and a year from the time you get this I'll be home. DeV. Love to all,

Ida M. Tarbell.

The purple flower is heather from Jersey -- the sea weed is from the beach at San Maro.