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Letter: Ida M. Tarbell to family, October 26, 1891

Tarbell, Ida M.

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(Letter from Ida M. Tarbell to her family -1891)

5 Rue du Sommerard, Paris
26 October, '91

My Dear Family:

I am just home from a McAll Mission where I have been acting as a door keeper. I have washed myself warm and eaten up the remnants of the dinner and as long as I can keep awake want to write to you. I received Will's letter of the 11th on the 23rd. I was so glad to get it. Letters are the brightest things we get and if a week goes by without them it seems awfully doleful. I had four last week, with Will's. The Dispatch letter came all right. I have not heard from any of the rest of the papers to which I sent copies of the letter. But it is hardly time, I think. I had a kind letter from Miss Ames of the Union Signal saying that my letters were all satisfactory. Nobody seems inclined to send checks yet though the Dispatch said they would, "in due season," whatever that may mean.

In my mail last week I received a lovely letter from the Nichols. You know they asked me to write them something on the McAll work. I sent them a long letter in September. They read it in their annual meeting and Mrs. Nichols was good enough to say very kind things about it. She sent me two papers with notices of the letter. In one of them I saw announced as "formerly editor of The Chant, now doing McAll work in Paris," and the other as "one of the editors of The Chant." If the dear doctor hears this latter I
expect he have another grievance and suspect me of trading on the reputation of The Chautauqua. Mr. Nichols put a note into his wife's letter in which he said he met Mr. Duncan of Chautauqua fame at Duluth in the summer, that they talked about me and that Mr. Duncan told him that Prof. Cumnock had told him (Mr. D.) "how brutally" Flood acted about you me. He says: "I believe I asked you if he did the fair thing about you and you didn't say. You needn't think any of your friends will think any less of you for any attitude Flood may take. I think The Chautauqua has grown beautifully and suddenly less since you left it. So there!" I said nothing at all to the Nichols about the trouble in M. though I felt that they were curious about it. Now that they know, I shall write them as little, not much. Mr. Duncan is to be here very soon and I shall see him I presume. Mrs. Henry wrote Mary that Miss Willard told her that Dr. F. came to her at Chautauqua, saying "What do you know about the Mary Henry matter?" Miss W. said: "I have not been dragged into that and do not intend to be. I think that Miss H. and Miss T. probably had sufficient reasons for leaving as they did." Miss W. said he went away cross. Ah, well, I don't mind now but doesn't it seem ridiculous that I shouldn't even have an entrée into the pages of the magazine? I would starve before I would ask for that now though. I did not mean to write anything more home about this but all these things were so unexpected that I thought you would be interested in them. I forgot to say above that Mrs. Nichols wrote me that my letter to the meeting was to be published in some Springfield paper. I'll ask her to send you a copy.

Since I wrote you last I have been going on about as usual. I have had a frightful cold which is nearly gone now. This is the
second since I came. It is hard work getting acclimated but I think I am nearly through the process. I feel well in spite of the disturbances my system suffers. I have no Saturday excursion to tell you about this week. Last Saturday it rained hard all day and we worked instead of playing. We went out for dinner last night (Sunday) to the Newell's. There were 5 young artists present. One of them has a fine reputation. His father is rich and was so disappointed because the young man took to art that he would not help him. The boy nearly starved in N.Y. Then he came here and the father gave him a little more. Last year 4 of his pictures were accepted at the Salon. Now he is feasted and petted everywhere. After the dinner which was cozy and homelike, we all went to the reading rooms where the services are held in the evenings. After the service which is informal, we had lemonade and a good visit.

I met Dr. Thurber and Mrs. T. at the McAll meeting tonight. They want me to join the church there and I think I shall. I am to take the Infant Class in two weeks. I shall have there all the outside work I can do. Sunday evening I am to give to the Newells, the afternoons to the Thurbers and Monday evening to the McAll.

We have had a very nice letter from our steamer friends telling of their safe arrival in Baltimore and Phil. One of the gentlemen has two sisters-in-law who came over soon and are to hunt us up in Paris. Isn’t it odd how the lines do stretch all over the earth? By the way I enclose a card for missionary money. I met two little French girls, converts of the McAll’s who have been 18 months alone in Algiers doing a kind of mission work among the Arab
women. They have nothing but what friends give them. The poor little things are so lean and hungry looking that I have taken pity on them. Won't you and Mrs. Banett (I know Mother loves her as a) fill out these blanks with 10 or 25 or 50 cents subscriptions and send to me? I am going to send another to Mrs. Nichols. You need not hesitate because they are independent. They need friends all the more and really are doing honest work though probably both of them will starve to death soon. I would like to have them have one square meal first.

By-the-way, my bedroom slippers are wearing out. Don't you suppose you could knit the tops of a new pair and send them one at a time in a role of papers? I can have them soled here. Also before Spring I shall need new mittens. Won't you send me some for Xmas? I am bound to beg you see. But you can't get these things here and it is so cold. I shall send a roll of papers to Mother soon marked private. She is to open it in the secret peace of her house and not let anybody see what I send until I tell her to. I want to see if things will go over all right. I don't think much will. Nobody need think he's going to get a diamond ring or a sealskin saque. But I must stop. Write me often and tell me all the gossip. Love to everybody. I am going to write to my Sweetheart soon.

Yours Lovingly,
Ida M. Tarbell

Paris
62.