Letter: Juliet V. Straner to Ida M. Tarbell, July 30, 1913

Straner, Juliet V.

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From Emma Tarbell

Dear Mrs. Tarbell,

Let me begin by telling you that I’ve always admired you as one of the greatest women minds of my time. I think from times lately printed in The American Woman’s Monthly, and I also read with deepest interest your piece in The Ladies Home Journal.

Today after finishing your essay in The August Journal I feel like telling you something. This is confidential. I brought five little girls into the room before I knew what marriage was.
memories — while I was entirely ignorant of life — I was an orphaned child as a helper. Then they turned me.

They father also was very young and very irresponsible. But some way

I learned upon me that I must

make life worth while for those children — so I began. But I'm not
drawn — it now dog poor and my dear

young husband played poker and lost
what little he earned. Mind you he's

a fine fellow now — but as I say he

was my prime jung.

My mother bragged — well I can't tell for

truth so you'd know — but she really

was the most intelligent woman and
the earliest - so determined we set out to educate these little girls. The result was they were finer, more talented far away more intelligent than any of the girls who went away to school. I taught them to cook at our house was a place of superlatively happens on that of a delinquent father. I took God along with me every moment. I put my personal grief quite away I lived fully and grandly with the children for them. One of them when she was 21 married a civil engineer - with fine prospects & a good character the other married a fine looking brilliant local politician. I thought I had arrived. The girls were "raised" & I had a paying profession. All at once
out of a clear sky came the news of events that have simply knocked me silly. My eldest daughter husband quite out of sorts in his profession, brought the family through it. She, the one who had balances to a gentle man. My second child's husband went bad in politics but all he had through her to directly shame and the death of simple grief and despair. I was home the little boy to war — and you my dear daughter through heart. Never I could a little thank done along with a husband who bears all signs of being a change for us to keep always. Right along with this I see families that just 'muddled up', somehow riding in their automobiles and having plenty of money —.
us socially and I see girls who wear
and a lack of work within his drum
like empires - managing fine
homes & grand looking children. The
of those aren't even "straight." I had a
baby before she was married six months
I simply immersed myself on the
altar of home. I lived for my duty
of the human race. I was fully
fulfilling of persons when I duty
you may have read some of my work
along that line. But here I am,
fifty years old. One darling Child
dead - the other in most confusing
circumstances. Strictly knowing
Mother to live with a man. She can't
suffer her but she cares. Makes her
from mine children (which I have
provided!)  

Here is the outcome of all this?  
My home is now so desolate—my 
pretty charming talented girl 
died under such tragic circum 
stances. My beautiful mother one 
long ago—the most ingenious 
little first born of mine facing 
her more than hard problem— 
My husband is fine now and 
I am thankful for him—but 
Oh, honey, when you write about 
home—well—of course it all 
time I must get to keep on saying
- but it's for your own good, you know. This is going to be good for you. Think about how it will make your life better.

I think it's important to know how to live. The right way to live is to be honest and kind. It's not about being perfect, it's about trying your best. You will make mistakes, but that's okay. It's how you learn and grow.

I can see how you struggle with things. It's okay to feel that way sometimes. But I want you to know that you are strong and capable. You can do hard things. You just need to believe in yourself.

And remember, I am always here for you. No matter what. I love you, and I want you to be happy.

Keep going, my dear. You have the power to make a difference in the world.
on your time or a presumption on
my part. Your stuff is grand-

more got I keep preaching it -

But — well — you must Iason

His faith but I am always had to

in my system to match you a

my turn it !

Armstrong

Julia T. Stevens

Author of "Diary of a Plain Country

Woman"
Dear Miss Tarbell:—

Let me begin by telling you that I have always admired you as one of the foremost women writers of our times. I think your series lately printed in the American very masterly and I also read with deepest interest your page in the Ladies' Home Journal.

Today, after finishing your articles in the August Journal I feel like telling you something. This is confidential. I brought two little girls into the world before I really knew what marriage meant—while I was utterly ignorant of life. I was irresponsible as a heifer when they were born. Their father also was very young and very irresponsible. But some way I dawned upon me that I must make life worth while for those children; so I began. Bricks without straws; we were dog poor and my dear young husband played poker and lost what little he earned. Mind you he's a fine fellow now, but as I say he was very young.

My mother was—well I can't tell you just so you'd know—but she really was the most intelligent woman and the liveliest—so between us we set out to educate these little girls. The result was they were finer, more talented by far and more intelligent than any of the girls who went away to school. I taught them to cook and our home was a place of superlative happiness in spite of delinquent father. I took God along with me every moment. I put my personal grief quite away and lived fully and grandly with the children's hopes.
One of them when she was twenty-one married a civil engineer, with fine prospects and a good character. The other married a fine looking brilliant politician. I thought I had arrived. The girls were "raised" and I had a paying profession. All at once out of a clear sky came the series of events that have simply knocked me silly. My eldest daughter's husband failed utterly - lost out in his profession, brought her to poverty, though he does not drink and has no bad habits - is a gentleman. My second child's husband went hard in politics, lost all he had, brought her to poverty and shame and she died of simple grief and despair.

I now have her little boy to rear and I see my elder daughter, though brave and true and good a little worked down drudge with a husband who shows all signs of being a charge for us to keep always.

Right along with this I see families that just "tumbled up" somehow, rising in their automobiles and having plenty of money, patronizing us socially and I see girls who never did a lick of work in thier lives driven like sempresses and managing fine homes and grand looking children. One of these wasn't even "straight" - had a baby six months before she was married.

I simply sacrificed myself on the altar of home. I lived for my duty to the human race. I was full of your idea of woman's sphere and duty. You may have read some of my work along that line. But here I am, fifty years old, one darling children dead - the other in most unfortunate circumstances. Scarcely knowing whether to live with a man who can not support her but who can make her have
more children (which Heaven forbid).

Where is the outcome of all this? My home is now so desolate; my pretty, charming talented girl dead under such tragic circumstances. My beautiful mother gone long ago. the sweet mignon little first born of mine facing her more than hard problem. My husband is fine now and I am thankful for him, but, Oh, honey, when you write about home - well - of course, it's all true and we've got to keep on saying it - but if you ever fancy you've missed a whole lot in missing motherhood - just don't think so any more.

With the knowledge I now have of life no power could tempt me to bring a child into the world or undertake to rear it. I have the dear little boy with me and must do my best, but I shake in my boots - really I wake up in the night and toss and tumble (I don't want you to fancy that I sleep in my boots though) When I realize that I have him to rear.

I hope you won't think this an infringement on your time or a presumption on my part. Your stuff is grand and we've got to keep preaching it, but - farewell - and pardon this outburst. I have always had it in my system to write you and now I've done it.

Admiringly

Juliet V. Straner

Author of "Ideas of a Plain Country Woman."