

Typed by M. Cloud

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Ada P. McCormick
Tucson, Arizona
October 4, 1945

(Letter from Ida Tarbell to
her family - 1892)

December 1
Friday P.M.

109ALT My Dear Family:

There are two things you'll have to do when I get home - take tea at 5 o'clock and drink after-dinner coffee. They're the only bad habits I have picked up so far, but them I've fixed upon me and I fancy I'll never give them up. The tea is the greatest comfort of my life. I get home about 5 P.M. from the library, the crossdest, miserablest woman in the Quarter. I light my alcohol lamp, I make myself some tea and in 10 minutes I'm as good as ever. I've been astonished at the quantities of tea one takes here. Everybody takes it in fact at 5 P.M. and at the Marillier's both mother and sons - they serve it at 10 o'clock in the evening the nights they have company. Nothing but tea with little cakes or crackers.

All this introduction is owing to the fact that I've had my temper restored by a cup just now and find myself in consequence braced up to write you a letter. I've been trying to do so for a week but I've had a rather peculiar bit of work on hand. Some time ago Mr. McClure wrote me that they were going to publish in their N.Y.'s number, a quantity of maxims from distinguished people and asked me to get something over here. I made my visits for them last week. The first was on Pasteur. I took my article along and showed it to him. He chuckled over it in such a childish way it made me almost cry, and he promised me my maxim. I went back for it a few days afterwards. He said he had sent it and was greatly disturbed to think I had not

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received it. Poor old man! "That--bo--b--thers me" he said (only it was in French cela m'ennuie). He talks with a pitiful hesitancy. I went the next evening as he asked me to. I had a charming time. M^{me} Pasteur came in and was very kind. She had to stand over him and encourage to write his sentence. He trembled so he had to stop several times and she said cheerily, "Never mind, go on. Quick now, that's good." When he had it done, he was in despair. It didn't please him and he was as pettish as a child. So he tried it over and the second was worse than the first. "You may take your choice" he said "but I'm afraid you won't want either." He bade me goodbye very sweetly and said my article was good, asked me what I did. I told him I was writing an article on the Mt. Blanc Observatory and he was very much pleased, told me two or three times what a good subject it was. M^{me} Pasteur asked for a second copy of the magazine because Dr. Meskinhoff, the Russian, had carried off theirs, he liked his picture so much.

After Pasteur I went to see Daudet. I had written M^{me} D. asking her to intercede with de Goncourt, her friend, and her husband. The day I went she received me very kindly, but said Alphonse was just writing his . We talked a while and she invited me to go into Daudet's library. I was overjoyed for I have never had a sight of the Master as they call the big men over here. It was in a very pretty room, not very large that D. was writing his verse for me. He smiled up at me very good-naturedly. He is a little man with a shock of straight black hair which stands out like the new fashioned dress shirts. His face is pale and his eyes astonishingly black and bright. I think he's lost two or three teeth and the rest aren't very good.

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We talked while he finished his work. He bends over the desk and writes painfully in a fine hand. He said he hadn't finished the copy because he had a visit from an anarchist. That his servant had let in a man who had demanded a louis (gold piece of 20 francs) to ~~be~~ buy a wagon load of dynamite to blow up the Hôtel de Ville. He was furious when he talked about it, said he really expected the man to kill him and got out his revolver which he keeps in the drawer under his writing desk. "It would have been a pretty affair" he said, "if while you two were visiting in there a drama had gone on here." When I went away M^{me} Daudet invited me to come on her day when I would, which I certainly shall do. It's a good thing to talk about - being received at M^{me} D.'s, you know, and I'm not above such vulgar tricks.

My best visit was at Coppée's, the poet. I went to see him and he thought I wanted an interview. I hadn't dreamed of such a thing but as he suggested it, I took my chance quick and said I did. He was awfully busy and danced wildly around me trying to get rid of me without hurting my feelings. He's been a journalist and hasn't forgotten what dirty work interviewing is - and I danced around him trying to persuade him that I would love to go away at once - and come back. He gave me a day to return and of course I went. We had a fine talk and I shall get a good letter from it for the Boston Transcript for which I hope to write regular literary letters now. He gave me his last book with a nice little dedication. He is charming, Coppée, though he writes the greatest lot of pure nothingness in such a happy way that one can't help reading it. If one wasn't so

horribly analytical over here he could enjoy his pretty nonsense without trouble but this French intelligence doesn't permit one to admire anything blindly.

After Coppée I saw M^{me} Adam, the editor of the Nouvelle Revue and one of the most influential women in Paris in a literary way; Jules Simon, a Jew and a senator; Dumas the playwright and novelist, and Zola, the greatest of them all in spite of the bad things they say about him. Dumas' house is exquisite. The most perfect taste and the rarest of pictures. He has been a great collector and last winter sold off scores of valuable paintings but he still has quantities left. He received me in his working dress, a sort of Turkish combination suit in gray flannels, something like the ~~under~~ suits Ella made the children for night gowns only the whole thing was fuller and it was tied in with a cord at the waist. I was surprised to find him so refined. His head is beautiful and eyes very grave and thoughtful though very cold.

Zola's house is abominable. It is filled with "things," furniture, bric-a-brac, pictures, sculptures, pottery, tapestries, old carvings, armor, and only the inventory-taker knows what else are fill the stair case and salon, the only rooms I saw. He married the daughter of a street peddler, I believe, so you cannot expect him to have much help from his wife in an artistic way. He really is to be admired for marrying her though. Most of them do not think of such a thing as marrying the woman they fall in love with. Zola is a good husband too, they say, and very domestic. He is a rather small man, slight and nervous with exceedingly penetrating eyes and an air of great intelligence and quick decisions. He wore a suit of knit jersey in gray. All of them seem to have a peculiar writing dress. Coppée wore a scarlet frock jacket in a sort of felt cloth.

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Daudet wore a common black suit which struck me as a little soiled. I think I'm done with my visits now and glad enough that it is over. It took a lot of time but it has given me some ideas and helped me to have a little more confidence in my power to get around. The truth is these people are kind, kind, kind, if you approach them with tact. I never saw greater courtesy than I received from all these famous men. So you have something to interest you the maxims from France which will appear in the Jan. No. of the little magazine. Notice Pasteur's, Coppée's and Jules Simon's particularly.

I am busy as ever. I have finished another chapter of my book this week, that is in the rough and like into the thing in earnest to finish it. Did you see the N.E. magazine? I think a copy of that would interest Claude on account of the pictures.

I suppose you had turkey for Thanksgiving. I didn't. In fact I didn't even remember it was Thanksgiving, and I'm afraid I shall do no better for Xmas. N. Yrs. I shall for I'm invited to "watch" with the M's, and to set up my shoe (instead of hanging stocking) along with theirs. The money market is calm but firm - for two months - at least. I should think it must be hard times in America, for the Union Signal wrote me the other day it couldn't pay me \$1500. yet, it owes me. ~~Real~~ Pretty bad for the \$1,000,000 Temple, isn't it? McClure, however, declares he's out of the woods and won't keep me waiting again. I told him my opinion very frankly and he said I was right.
Monday, Dec. 4

I am afraid this will be more than a five-cent letter (do you ever have to pay extra postage on my letters?) If I write full

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accounts of all I've done since I finished the above sentence.
That was Friday evening. Saturday evening M^{me} Bonnet invited me
to a party down stairs. It was her , her niece and nephew
and their . We were French, 2 Roumanians, 4 Egyptians,
1 Italian and 1 American. I supposed it was a little affair but at
11 o'clock they spread the table, and gave us ice cream and wafers,
then tea and brioche, then cakes and champagne (I drink it - when I
can get it). After it was over there were games and music and
dancing, etc. One of the Roumanians plays the violin. He plays the
arias of his country very well and we applauded him so much that he
was carried away by it and would not stop. He played for an hour
without stopping and it was 2 A.M. when he began. I supposed they'd
break up then but no they coaxed one of the Egyptians to sing Arab airs
and he had his head turn and it was nearly 4 when he stopped. Then
we had refreshments again and actually it was 5 o'clock when the
affair broke up. It was like a country dance in American. It is aston-
ishing how much alike things are anyway when you get below the surface.
Daudet said the other day "it is only the outside which is different
between you and us" and he is right. I hoped to sleep all day Sunday
but I was awakened by a letter from Mrs. Southend saying she'd go to
the hospital with me to see a sick woman and inviting me to dinner.
We went to see the poor old soul. Mrs. S. gave her 5 francs. I expect
she hasn't seen so much for 6 yrs. I went over to their house in the
evening. It is very swell, and about 100 Americans there in the evening.
and her daughter and Mrs. Comfort came in. Mrs. P. has
been this side since spring and Mrs. C. spends her time between
stopping a good deal in Cairo where she has a daughter married.

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They go there this week. Mrs. D. spoke of being on a committee in
T. with father and remembering so well our "pretty white house." They
were very nice to me and seemed to think journalism a decent profession
and me a respectable representative, which hairt so. The Southards
are temporarily in the . Mrs. S. is a charming woman.
No more space or I would write more. Keep up your speerits, don't get
blue and the goose will yet hang high. If some "fool thing" don't
pull it down as Will says.

Love to all,

I.M.T.

(Is Marion Fertig married? Mrs. Pickering said so.)

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