824 St. Nicholas Ave

[Probably 1917]

My dear Miss Tarbell:-

This, I suppose, is the nine hundredth letter, but nobody else is nearly so sorry to know you're ill as I was when Gertrude Shelby wrote me. I like to feel that there's only a certain amount of misery in the world. If I get a whole lot, surely the people I care about will be spared — and now look what's happened to you, happened, too, when the country needs you so badly. I used to think God was merely Jewish but now He looks to me distinctly pro-German. I can't stretch my philosophy to cover the case. Some of us need pain to show us exactly what zero in the scale of values is but you know already. The operation you've had seems to me the most torturing of all the list I know. I remember five

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gonized days afterward and nights when there wasn't anything to do but annoy the interne in charge. I bothered him fearfully asking about Resurrection Day. With a toenail in San Francisco and an appendix in New York and another scrap in Mississippi, and the difference in time being what it is, would I have to wait till the appendix resurrected itself and came and got me, or would I have to start the day before and - you can see that it's a lovely, speculative subject of conversation. The interne who was an orthodox Baptist explained over and over that God is Omnipotent and that He'll resurrect all at once simultaneously and collectedly, but finally he said the head surgeon he'd quit if that crazy woman in 36 didn't stop talking about her scattered works. He said he got so he couldn't sleep for thinking of stray organs flying all over the place looking for the people who owned 'em. I do not think they provide sufficient amusement in hospitals. My Plat-

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Game would fill a novel but nobody will publish it. And hospital staffs aren't very human. Wearing white is what does it. I never knew a nurse yet who didn't talk about "they." If you want a drink, "they" don't usually have water till next week. If you bounce exactly as if you were entirely full of wheels, "they" usually are restless the first few days. Some day I'm going to lecture in medical schools on The Treatment of Patients' Feelings. That painful way of remarking on how "She's going," "she's nearly gone" ought to be corrected. And in my opinion stomach tubes ought never to be greased.

There wasn't any excuse for my writing to you except that I'm so distressed I can't help it. I do so hope you'll be perfectly well now. I despair of things being done sanely unless you're there keeping tabs.

I recommend that you take no notice whatever of my letter — only just remember that I'm dreadfully sorry you're ill.

Sincerely
Ruth Kimball Gardiner.

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