Typed by M. Cloud

Ada P. McCormick
Tucson, Arizona
September 21, 1945

12

(Letter from Ida Tarbell to her family)

On Board

S. S. Friesland
Wednesday - Seven bells, P.M.
1891

My dearest Family:

2T I have become a clam. The evolution has been sudden and complete and necessary. It is that or-a basin. But to go back to yesterday which I think must have been at least a century ago. We left New York at 7 P.M. Our first start was a faux pas on my part. I mistook the ferry which was to take us to the pier and reached Jersey City two (2) miles from where we should have been -- at the Erie Ferry instead of the Pennsylvania. Fortunately the streetcar ran direct and we got to the right spot about 8:30. The great steamer wharf was crowded with hurrying passengers, with friends come to bid them goodbye, with emigrants loaded with boxes and bundles, with beds and baskets and babies. There were scores of trunks and we were a half hour finding our luggage and getting it in everything had connected and we not long in getting inside and examining our future

8T residence. The stateroom is really very decent. It is about the size of Lizzie's room arrangeddich

(sketch of room)

Two strangers were in Miss Towle's room and I was afraid to have her go with unknown females both strangers to each other and to her and so I took her berth. It was very late before I found out my mates. The night was spent in getting ready to go. About 10 P.M. a jolly crowd of 50 or more came aboard with the organist of St. George's

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Choir. It was the choir I believe. They gave a concert in the salon and sent the lucky young fellow off with cheers and good wishes by the thousand. There were baskets and baskets of flowers, fruit, etc., etc. We watched the steerage people come on for a long time. They pulled and hauled them, swore at them in a half dozen tongues, scared them by threats, and finally stowed them all away somewhere. I went to bed early and after I was in had the fun of seeing my future partners come in.

One is a vicious and unlovely old stager if I am any judge. Jo says says she looks as if she "got drunk" and I think if she doesn't possess all the accomplishments which go with that performance that face and figure are awful . The other is a sweet little miss from Conn. whose brother is taking her over for a short trip. She has a brother in the University in Berlin whom she'll visit. She knows the organist, and we are to meet him. I have taken her to chaperon. We got up this morning to see the ship pull out at 6 A.M. There were hosts of people to wave goodbye and I had hard work to keep the tears back though nobody was in the crowd waving to me. There were no incidents worth speaking of coming out. The City of Paris came out just behind us, passed us and now is ahead and even her smoke lost to view. The Galilea has been abreast all day on the northern horizon. We have seen three whales spout and passed a school of dolphin. They jumped high out of the water and made many acrobatic feats.

The table, the people aboard and the state of our stomachs have been our principal interests so far. The first is good. We breakfast at 7:30, lunch at 12, dine at 5, and I have done very well at all three places today. The people we are looking over and shall

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soon know, I think. Surely shall if this weather lasts. The day has been charming and only a little roll of the boat which they say is unusually steady. I have stuck to my chair mainly for it would take a very little over ambition to send me below. - - It is now almost dark and so I'll end my first days record.

Thursday Morning: Able to write. Things going delightfully.

Thursday afternoon. I wrote a line and a half and was overtaken with indolence. I never knew the possibilities for laziness in my make-up before. I am as entirely cut off from all sorts of interests as I am from the land. I don't think, read, talk, care. I suppose it is good for me. I have not been at all sick nor have any of the girls only at times a little dizziness which a little quiet cures. We have formed a pleasant acquaintance with three gentlemen over vis-a-vis at table. They are married men, and have showed us their wives' pictures and tell us every meal how much they think of them. One is an architect, another a marble dealer, a third a civil engineer. They are going to Carrara, Italy, to select marble for a building in which they are all interested. They take wine at dinner and insist on our joining which, of course, we don't do. Mr. Sisson, the marble dealer, takes too much sometimes, too, I fancy. Games are coming out today, cards are popular with the gentlemen. On deck they play shuffle-board and ring toss. Every thing in the sea makes a commotion. The Prince Bismark signaled us today and several tramps have appeared and disappeared. The weather stays misty and lovely.

Friday A.M.

I began the day with a salt bath. One can get them

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by speaking to the stewardess ahead. I had mine at 6:30, dressed, made 11½ rounds of the deck which is a mile, formed a pleasant acquaintance on the way, had a present of a pear, breakfasted, suffered an hour with beastly neuralgia, recovered, was presented with a box of candy, lost a , settled myself for writing, reading and sleeping. It is warm this morning for we are in the Gulf Stream. I have on my heavy flannels, but no wraps though we are sitting on the windward side. Nothing has happened but a very large flock of gulls feeding this morning. I still am completely under the power of the sea. Nothing has presented itself strong enough to arouse me. The people are interesting, very, but the sea and the langour are so much more delightful that I finding talking an awful bore. We have a bride or two aboard - well behaved and pretty. My "old stager " was awfully sick last night, out of bed 5 times. She's got a man, too, and is passing and repassing while I sit here. My pretty little room mate has won the organist but he is melancholy and shy and she gets only a little of him. Passed a large school of blue fish. They jumped from the water three or four feet in air forming a series of blue curves. Passed a steamer, the first we have beaten yet. I think they are broken down or we could not have done it. Since lunch I have been in the engine room. You will find on the passenger list which I send you interesting figures on the vessel. You go down 23 ft. under water to see the shaft. You follow it to the stern over the screw where there is nothing but 3/8 ins. of iron plate between you and the Atlantic.

Morning - Saturday.

Heavy sea this morning. We are off the Banks and begin to feel the cold and fog. Our table party has proved a great success. We

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have mutually adopted each other and are having a fine time. The gentlemen keep us in candy now that they have discovered that we won't take wine with them.

Last night we went down at 9 o'clock and had lemonades and welsh rarebit. I expected to get up dizzy or not at all this morning, but I had a fine swim at 6:30. I say swim for the salt water bath is so strong that one cannot get to the bottom of the tub. Mr. Carson suggested going in with Mr. Scisson and sitting on him to see if he could keep him down. This morning after breakfast I took 15 rounds of the deck and visited the stern where the second class passengers go. Don't ever go second class. Smells awful!!! and such a jar! Our whole party received presents of candy again, box apiece and mine the biggest of all. I am the chaperon you see and they all take care of me. Mr. Smits whose sister I adopted was sick yesterday. I visited the ship's doctor and got him quinine. Today he, being better, went into a pool in my name and won me 5 francs. You see what trivial things make a ship's day. Occasionally there are a few moments of intelligent conversation. There are many students aboard-some of them very interesting. The musical is in the lead. When we came up from lunch it rained wretchedly and the fog had settled on us. We have dared it all and are on deck in shawls, rubbers, blankets, etc. There is nothing so bad as being below this weather on account of the closeness.

Here's a French puzzle for Will

G. a. $\frac{h}{a}$

G grand (capital G) a petite (little a) a sous h = J'ai grand appetit a souper.

PARIS

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5T Sunday P.M.

I wish you could have seen me last night. I think I said it was rainy and nasty. After dinner the fog horn began to blow - 10 seconds in every minute. The ship was tumbling about terribly. We went below with the gentlemen, "our gentlemen," and played games. In the midst I was suddenly called to my state room where I left my dinner. I staid on deck until 9 o'clock, made my rounds among my charges and went to bed. As soon as I lifted my head this morning I vomited but I went to my bath. I tumbled out of that into the room and repeated the performance. Before dressed, away she went again. But I went to breakfast, and again retired. I was "tired" but I managed to get on deck where I staid until lunch. The sea is glorious, running high and washing the lower deck until 1 foot of water stood on it. Last night Jo went out with a gentleman on the upper deck and a wave struck them nearly washing them over and wetting them through. The prettiest sight of the morning was a flying fish. It darted up like an arrow, flew for ~~several rods~~ 50, 80 or 100 ft. It was like a silver fish with gauze
16T wings. We saw a sail on the horizon, too, a ghost ship in full rig. The spectral thing made one shiver. We have had sail up today, four square sails on the fire-mast and it made us spin. The vessel is said to be as heavily loaded as any which ever went from the port of N.Y. and consequently she is very steady.

I enjoyed my lunch today more than any meal I have had on board. All the good effect of sea sickness. I spent the afternoon until dinner on the deck. This is Mr. Coffin's birthday. He is one of the most thoroughly refined and highly cultured men I have met in a long time. He is rich and of fine family and as modest as a child. He has a wife and three boys, alas! But we are great cronies. In

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honor of his day we each exchanged wrote sentiments on a card and tied them with ribbons and laid them on his plate in a flag. Tonight we have sung, "Watt's hams and spiteful songs" as somebody called them. And then home songs. If you only knew how I love you all here. Sometimes we get to talking of home and I tell them of you all until I can't talk any more. And then somebody else begins on his family and talks until he gives it up. It makes one appreciate home to go away.

The "crowd" is getting very devoted. The gentlemen call us the "big four." Mr. Scisson is our clown. We call him "True Blue." He is the best fellow in the world, and so devoted to the "ladies," and calls me "Mammy," Jo "Sport," Mary "Midget" and Anna (Miss Towle) "Patient." Poor thing! She has been so ill today. His companions, he calls the "Dudes," Mr. Coffin who is the personification of dignity and modesty he calls the "Old Dude." He was so taken with Mr. C's celebration that he insisted on having one himself, tomorrow.

Monday A.M. Up in good shape. Ate my breakfast, sat on deck until noon. It was misty and drizzly and miserable, but we have had a merry time. Mr. Scisson's birthday was occasion for a lark. He has insisted on talking French and German without knowing either and so we all wrote French and German verses for him and an artist fixed us up a horn of paper which we presented to him as "Little Boy Blue." Then at dinner a cablegram was sent in from "Tootsie" as he calls his wife. A heavy fog settled on us this P.M. and we passed a ship to the leeward only about 50 yds. away. The fog horn has been blowing and the decks are frightfully slippery. A bad accident has come to a little girl from Washington. She fell and sprained her ankle badly. It will lay her up for a month. Her father is a doctor and she has plenty of care.

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18T All the diary I am keeping is this for you and I am obliged to write when I can. There seems so many things to interrupt though I am doing nothing serious. When you come over be prepared to do nothing and you will be successful. I never before was utterly willing to go on forever without lifting my head. I find I have everything I need for such a trip except perhaps a box of preserved ginger. One of the gentlemen has one and it is very refreshing.

It is very easy to pick up a little French here. Here are some of the little things going around.

Je sins le capitaine de cinq-vingt soldats.

Sans moi Paris serait-pris." Guess it.

Pronounce this word.

"Constantinapolstannchedudelsachpfeiffermachengesel!"

Here is a pronouncing exercise which the ship's doctor gave us.

Didon dina, dit-on, d'un dos d'une dodu dindon.

Miss Smitz and I go every day to him. Last night the three of us read Victor Hugo together.

19T Wednesday Morning.

I have come down from deck into the saloon, which is the dining room with the tables cleared, to write you a little. My previous pages in pencil I am really afraid you cannot read. Yesterday, Tuesday, was a glorious day. There was something radiant about it and quite unlike anything we have seen. By noon the sun was bright and plenty of white caps. The colors are deep and intense, blues of every shade from the palest light made by the foam underthe water to the depths of darkness which are almost black. The white caps are like crystal stirred

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into fragments and tossed by the ship full high in air. It became foggy a little in the afternoon but not to prevent a steamer on our right being seen. It was not far away. We could see every line, and the color of her stack ~~them~~ with naked eye. She was bound for Baltimore. I was wild to have them come near enough to see the passengers who soon, happy soulsi would soon be in America.

The working of the ship is very interesting. Today we have been down to see the steering apparatus which is run by steam and directed from the pilot house 500 feet away and 5 decks higher. 20T In case of accident to it there are two huge wheels to be manned. It requires 10 sailors to work them. We visited the rooms of 1st and 2nd mates and of the doctor. They are little places but decorated of course. The 2nd mate has a sweet potato vine growing from a bottle and in it a huge pink rose pinned. One has a canary which has a long strained form, caused I suppose by stretching its neck and standing on its toes so much to see what all this rolling is about. He was kept busy yesterday for we had our first real swells, huge billows which sent the boat back and forth or better from side to side in long, steady stretches. I enjoy it hugely and am not at all sick anymore.

The steerage passengers are a great delight to me or better study. There is too much misery under the surface to call it delight. Last night after dinner a crowd of first class passengers collected at the rail from which you can see the steerage and began to pitch them coins, entrenes (1/5 of a cent) and sous (1 cent) went down plentifully. Our "Boy in Blue" became greatly interested in the "poor devils" as he called them and got a double handfeful of small coins which we pitched

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them, a dozen at a time. One little fellow just the age of my "sweetheart" could not get any - too little - so we called him aside and I gave him a franc. "Here's to my sweetheart!" Don't let him forget his lady-love. The steerage furnishes its own dishes generally a big pan from which a whole family eats with spoon or finger. Someone among them plays an accordion and often they dance or sing. There are all nationalities, many of them, I think, have been glass-blowers. You will observe that I write with a variety of pens and pencils. I made the mistake of not bringing a pen with me - fountain pen. Don't forget one when you come. Jo got one for 10 cents in T.
Thursday A.M.

I think Will would go quite crazy if he could have seen the sight I saw this morning. A school of porpoises so close to the vessel that we could follow their flight under the water. I saw 40 abreast great fellows five (5) feet or more long, dart up and down with the swells for third of the length of the boat and then rising from the water leap for 20 feet in air and together strike the waves. I simply went wild. What a real sportsman would do I do not know. Yesterday we passed a school of them, hundreds upon thousands, leaping, darting, glancing in a wild effort to keep up with the vessel. The fish were all we saw yesterday save a few gulls. When you come over look up gulls, porpoises, Mother Carey's Chickens, etc. beforehand. Not a sail was seen all day. We are beginning to think of land and as we near I grow anxious about Ella. Dear Child I hope she is better. I dare not stop to think out here in this wilderness of water of what has happened since I left the world. God grant you are all safe.

Paris

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The sports of our party have taken a distinctively literary turn. Mr. Carson "ordered" up a birthday yesterday and we each composed something for him. The "Baby" as I call Mr. Scisson actually made rhymes beginning

"Here's to Pete
He's awful sweet
And all our girls do like him"

Pete is his name for Mr. Carson.

23T Here is our crowd song written by Mary Henry, in parody of "Riding down from Carson."

A Song of Seven

Sailing o'er with Carson
On the Friesland boat
We've a jolly "true blue"
And a friend of note.
Vis-a-vis with Carson
Sat the chaperon
Three were they beside her
Talking undertone.

Said the jolly "true blue"
Let me serve au bueree
Then they told each other
Who and what they were.
So across the ocean
On the Friesland boat
Sped the friends, and friendship
Grew without a check.

Courteous and kindly
Were the gallant three,
And they gave the ladies
Pleasant times at sea.
Benedicts so royal
Speed them everywhere!
Hope will get as good ones
And a debonnaire.

24T Mr. Carson gave each of us a bottle of perfumery from the ship barber which he informed us might be exchanged for a cake of soap.

The funniest thing of all is Mr. Scisson's journal for his wife. He began the other day by writing "Your" "old sport" is just feeling Bully." I would give anything to have Sara read his

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account of how the "Old Dudes" as he styles his friends put a pineapple in his bed and of his sensations when he struck it, of how "in the two-thousandth part of a second" he jumped out crying snakes and "took a drink" to counteract the possible poison before turning on the light to investigate.

Today he has written up the girls and though he vowed he couldn't and wouldn't read it to us or let us see it, he confided it to me. I read it aloud. I never laughed harder in my life. For pure naivetŠe, ingenuousness and honesty it is a production without equal But it is not all nonsense in this "crowd." There is too much culture for that. Here is a pretty song Mr. Coffin gave us.

Evening Song to the Virgin

Ave Sanctissima
We lift our hearts to thee
Ora pro nobis
'Tis nightfall in the sea.

25T

Watch us while shadows lie
Far o'er the waters spread
Hear the heart's lonely cry
Thine, too, hath bled.

Thou that hast looked on death
Aid us when death is near
Whisper of Heaven to faith
Thine, too, hath bled
Sweet Mother, hear.

Ave Sanctissima
The wave must rock our sleep
Ora, Mater, ora
Star of the deep.

By the way, I think you best save my letters for my sake. I may want to write something on steamer life one day and this will help me to impressions. If you come on - and you all must, provide

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yourselves with a few little things of the above character, little verses, conundrums, etc. It helps you on with your fellows.

I send a list of passengers marked and some facts about ship with chart of run. I would send a picture of vessel but they do not allow it in the mail. Remember nothing in my letters is to get to Brother . I have bigger fish to fry. I have not told you about the way they play ball here, fasten a long cord to the ball, the cord to a rafter in the deck's covering and then throw the ball. When she goes over haul her in. Bets are the chief sports on the ship's run and the gentleman compliments the ladies by putting them in a pool. Fancy me being handed a wine card on the back of which was written my number in a pool.

Don't tell Brother Jesse about this. I'm afraid the next issue of The Chautauquan might contain an article on the Follies of the Late Associates of this Magazine. By-the-way, if I needed anything more to cure me of my disagreeable feelings about that episode, I've found it. Snap your fingers, as I do mine, at the matter, but let me know the news.

Friday Morning.

Land ahoy! At 3 this A.M. we sighted land. I've been on deck since 6 o'clock watching as beautiful a sight as the earth affords, the chalky cliffs of Land's End and the Lizards swimming in amethyst. I never knew what the expression meant before. We saw Penzance where Gilbert and Sullivan Pirates cut their capers, its defenses, steeples, harbor, etc. Miss Towle declared that she saw the maids milking the cows at Land's End - with a glass. We have seen at Lizards

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a castle on a cliff which is almost a reproduction of the Truro Clay Pounds. I could imagine the Headland Light and the Highland House to be there instead of 3000 miles away. The vessels are beginning to thicken. This morning has given me the sight of my first Dutch sailed red sails. We saw a yacht with one red and one white sail. It is all beautiful, entrancingly beautiful. You must come over. Sell your silver, sell your overcoats, sell anything and everything but come to Europe. I suppose if we were buried in fog this morning and running constant danger of sending somebody or being sent ourselves to the bottom of the sea I would be less enthusiastic. The Passage has been remarkably easy and pleasant so says everybody. I shall send you this letter from Flushing sometime tomorrow, so that I must close today as there will be endless last things to do: packing, farewells, etc., etc. We shall stop in Antwerp long enough to see the chief sights and we are going to have the advantages of seeing the city in a great Catholic festival, the Assumption.(?)

I think we shall stop a day in Brussels and then to Paris. We have the hotel selected in both places, the ones frequented by ladies whom we have met on board. You may console yourselves if you need to by this: there is nobody here who has traveled at all but who says that our venture is perfectly feasible and plenty of people do it.

I hope you will be able to make out my letter. It is very dirty but the difficulty of writing here is considerable. Again I should be provided with ink and portfolio.

Goodbye! goodbye. We would give all Europe to see you all this morning. God be with you.

Your loving Voyageur

Ida M. Tarbell

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17.

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