

Oil City, Pa., Oct. 23, 1925.

Miss Ida Tarbell,
120 E. 19th Street,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Several months ago, I met you in "The Interesting People Department" in *The American Magazine*. You looked so friendly sitting there, 'neath that big tree that I wanted to sit down beside your chair on the grass and ask you to "tell me a story" about the old oil days in Oil City, McClintockville and Rouseville. But since I could not, I am taking the liberty of writing you a letter. Perhaps you might find time to write me some time and tell me about these places as you know them.

I read with a great deal of interest your fascinating "Story of Steel" in *McClures Magazine*. I have always admired Judge Gary, so I found it doubly interesting.

No doubt you remember where McClintockville is, for it is supposed to have been quite a busy little place at that time. Some of the old houses are still standing, and some still in use. The Rouseville Refineries extend from Rouseville almost down to the McClintockville Bridge. At the middle pier of the Traction Company's Bridge a spring still bubbles up which is supposed to have been found by the Indians, and the oily waters from it used to mix their warpaint. I understand your father invented the first wooden oil tanks used in this vicinity. If he could only see the hills here now. They are dotted about with huge gasoline and oil tanks. They have all recently been given a new coat of soft aluminum paint, and are not unsightly nestled in among the trees.

Two years ago Mother and I sold our home down town and bought a little place out here at McClintockville. We have a little white cottage with a red roof, a car barn, chicken coops and about three-quarters of an acre of ground. It is a dream of a little place, nothing grand of course, but so homey, and our gardens, both flower and vegetable, were beautiful this summer and some of the hardier flowers lingered until a few days ago. We rescued enough tea roses, stocks, poppies and asters to fill a cold frame, and they are blooming bravely despite the snow.

The cottage stands back on the hillside about a hundred feet from the road, and we have built a wide, comfortable cinder and stone walk down to the road. The walk is spanned by two white lattice-work archways "which I built myself." We planted yellow and white climbing roses beside them and a clematis vine to cover them temporarily until the roses get started. On either side of the walk gorgeous borders of flowers brightened the path. On the right, hollyhocks seemed to march "sedately up the hill," while on the left, masses of sweet-scented, old fashioned stocks, asters, gladiolas, grass pinks and phlox formed a riot of color, and the mingled fragrance was delicious. On dewy mornings the hollyhocks sprawled on the walk, while fat, clumsy bumblebees snugly slept in the pollen-strewn petal cradles.

We have such a splendid view here. We are far enough up on the hill to see down the valley where Oil Creek's slow, greasy water winds its way to the Allegheny. Across the creek the old Robertson oil property, which extends from the McClintockville Bridge down on either side of the highway for about a mile.

It is a rather swampy lowland which is commonly used by gypsy campers, baseball players, and as a pasture land for cattle belonging to people in town. It is called the McClintockville Commons now. It is an ideal mushroom garden, and is a popular place for fungi hunters on warm fall mornings at about 5:00 A.M.

At the lower end of the commons, refineries extend practically all the way down to the end of North Seneca Street. The trolley makes a trip every half hour between Oil City and Houseville. A bus line runs between Oil City and Titusville via the new McKinney Highway. The new highway was just completed last fall, but it seems so much better, for Titusville and Oil City seemed to need a connecting link. A great many of the oil men travel by motor morning and evening since it is more convenient than the railroad.

We have a swimming pool and a tennis court partly finished on our hillside, but on account of the weather the man had to discontinue work on them until spring. I wonder if you play tennis, Miss Tarbell. I learned this summer and I love it. It seems to me, it combines thrills, exercise and social interest better than any other one sport.

We are facing the west here and how I wish you might share this lovely sunset with me. I have seen more brilliant ones, but somehow there is such a golden warmth up there, and with the golden rays streaming up into the sky, it seems to lift one up and makes the earth seem, for the time being, of little moment. I watched until it faded to gray, then came back to earth.

It is only three miles into town and we attend church there and get our mail at the Post Office. Mother works down town and goes back and forth every day. When we moved out here I gave up my work as telephone operator, and now, beside doing the home work I am studying to be a writer. Mother goes to work at three in the afternoon and comes home at eleven at night. I usually do my writing and studying in the afternoons and evenings. I don't know what kind of a success I will make of my writing -- but I can't give it up until I have at least given it a try. My lack of education is, no doubt, a serious handicap to my progress, but perhaps by plodding along and working hard I may make it yet. My Daddy was killed before I was born and Mother had to take care of us both in spite of poor health. When I was ready for High School she was injured in an accident and I went to work in the telephone office. She has regained her health now and is also literarily inclined, having sold several small things.

Do you think there might be a chance for me by studying and working at writing, to succeed without any special training for it? And do you think those "Courses in Short-Story Writing or Journalism" would be of any real benefit to one? I only started out to introduce myself, but warming to the subject (as I am likely to do when talking about myself) I guess I rather overdid a full length biographical sketch of myself.

Mother and I would be very glad to have you visit us if you are ever in this vicinity. If you should ever write an article on old oil days and should come here, you would be welcome to stay at our home. I would be glad to do your typing for you or you could have the use of our machine. Our car, too, would be at your service in gathering data. The sky is brightening, and my Boston Terrier is begging me to go with him for a walk. So I must close now and go while it is still light.

Sincerely,

Lois M. Williams.
Box 565.