50 CENTRAL PARK WEST
NEW YORK CITY

May 24 1935

Dear Ida Tarbell.

Viola asked me to copy and send to you this letter from our old friend Genevieve Cowles believing that you would share our interest in it—

She was a fellow student with Qigi at Joseph DeCamp's Art School in Boston — and for years a painter. Then, in seeking for a model for a stained glass window in Grace Church, the subject of which was to be "The Soul in Darkness" she visited the prison at Weathersfield

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and her interest in prisoners had its beginning - She has painted a "mural" for the Chapel in Weathersfield - it took her years and a long sojourn in Palestine - and is a moving and comforting thing: Christ forgiving Peter who had denied him and saying "Feed my sheep" - And now - after being largely instrumental in the founding of the Artists' Counsel - which helps prisoners with materials and instructions if they have dispositions toward art^{or} literature - she has organized this Parnassus-on-Wheels - supplying reading matter to prisoners,

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you can gather from her letter
with what zeal and what
zest! Viola has just been the
means of her receiving books
from Doubleday – We have
also sent books – it seems
that one can send her any kind
and the inappropriate ones can
be exchanged at second hand
book-shops for books better
adapted to their use – Once
one's imagination makes the
gesture that Geneviève (in this letter) evokes,
on if it has the power of put-
ting itself in the place of an

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first-class embezzler, say — the thought of promoting the cause of sending books for Genevieve's Parnassus rouses a touch of ardor!

The more people knowing about this way of disposing of unwanted books — or this plot of land where fine books may act as good seed, — the better for this cause, so veritably a good one.

I know you too well, beloved Ida, without having had the good fortune of seeing you very often, — too well to fear that this letter will be thought a tiresome affliction.

Affectionately
Yours always
Custande Hall Brownell

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425 Temple St. New Haven
May 18 1935

Dear Miss Roseboro:

This morning the mail man brought me a delightful package of books from you. They bring you so close to me.

Since you helped years ago in that record of my first adventures in what we call "Penal institutions" it is quite delightful now to have your continued aid in my long social adventures in Jails.

I live by myself in a quite charming lodging room with really requisite wall-paper! I cook most of my meals, very simple ones, on a little gas eye, and skim my books leisurely while I eat - Last night I dipped into "Great Riches" This evening I have been enjoying "Her Majesty Elizabeth" which will surely take some prisoners into a new-old world, and so will "Gentlemen of the Regiment" and those other intriguing titles, all from your dear self!

A long letter from Parnassus ought long ago to have informed you of that Godsend of choice volumes from Doubleday Doran due to your benign influence!

It is largely due to such gifts of rare, new,

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fresh, clean books that Parnallee holds a certain sway in jail cell-blocks. When we can visit quite regularly I can really perceive that there becomes evident a sort of "literary atmosphere". I find one or more friends expecting us and it is amazing how really the "great books" meet quick approval.

Not long ago after an intimate little talk with a group of Prisoners in old Tolland Jail I was obliged to return again after I had left to bring some labels to paste on the shelves so that the books might be more easily located in sections, Science, Art, Fiction, Philosophy, Biography, Religion etc. I had left these labels in my purse in the Jailer's office. On returning hastily I was struck with the change in the mental atmosphere — such a happy stillness and a sense of contentment! One man was perched on the table, lost between the leaves of some volume; another was huddled up contentedly on a bench, others had stolen off into corners or into their cells. But the feeling of quiet happiness made me think of the goats and sheep browsing on the hills of Galilee!

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My collection of books that day had seemed to appeal to special individuals. There had been a marvelous book on "Electrical Wonders" with many plates showing the mechanism of the telephone, the radio, the electric light, etc. and when I had presented Spenser's "Faerie Queen" quite doubtfully, one prisoner had politely remarked — that he had noticed in the volume of Keats in the jail book-case, that Keats was influenced by Spenser — at least he thought so, "did I think so?" I imagined so, and he took it gracefully. Even the religious books had seemed to strike home. Then also I had found Harold Bell Wright's Biography for our jail librarian Fournier, a peculiarly interesting French Canadian. He had the wit to copy off the names of the authors of the books which his fellow-prisoners were reading and he had written to me "Here are them books that the men likes!" Harold Bell Wright and Conrad were included and Zane Grey, a universal favorite.

I hope that you will share this letter with Gigi and Kitty. I sent them as members of Parnassus on Wheels Inc, invitations to the service club luncheon in Bridgeport, where Chief Justice Maltbie is to speak on "The County Jails."

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and he is to make a special appeal for Parnassus and this speech should focus the public opinion of Connecticut upon our Jail Prisoners.

The Jail workshops have closed in Thirty post Jail which often holds 200 prisoners at once, and in Hartford which holds 300 all the more need to direct their minds when we deny occupation to their hands!

Parnassus is in dire need of another secretary our 3 assistants having gone out so that my work has been especially overwhelming this winter. We have also now a promising Fairfield County chapter of Parnassus including 13 Judges, and our regular membership counts 39 Judges and I do not know how many attorneys beside over 300 members in all. I really must stop now and go to bed.

Please tell that dear friend of yours at Doubleday Doran that their choice volumes are still going around the circle of my 8 Jails. I have gotten behind hand in visits owing to concentrated efforts in Fairfield County

Very gratefully

Yours

Gracious Cowles

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