

(Letter from Ida Tarbell
to her family - 1893)

Paris

Early March, 1893.

My dear Family:

I wish you were all here. We are in the midst of the most uproarious fete I ever saw. All Paris seems to have decided to "go it" for a day. It is Mi-Careno, the day of which I think I wrote you last year, but to the are added over 10,000 or more students and everybody else who can get a day off. I'm not "in it" for I have work but I've enjoyed it immensely nevertheless. I live in a quiet little street but the street musicians find us just the same. Today I heard some very good singing and went out on the balcony. Five students in masques were in the street singing and playing and begging money. The scamps were well dressed. One of them wore a full dress suit and white kid gloves and smoked cigarettes as he picked up the Sous. They must have got a dollar or twp with us. When I went to dinner at six o'clock I had great difficulty in getting through the crowd. Everybody is throwing confetti and I was deluged with the stuff. Then they carry peacock feathers and tease one unmercifully with them. It is really dangerous for some of them don't mind sticking the feathers in your eyes. The great novelty though is the serpentines. I enclose a sample. It is paper cut into ribbons and rolled into belts which are sold for 2 - 5 or 10 cents a piece according to measure. These are thrown from the windows into the crowd and sometimes one is so tangled up in the stuff you don't know where you are. They hang it too from the balconies. In the flat above me are some boys and they have hung the whole front of this house-- five stories--with a perfect lace curtain of yellow, red and blue ribbons. I send a picture which will show you what it looks like. Everybody is in masque and in this quarter the costumes are sometimes outrageous. I never saw Paris so much in humor for some fun, which is saying a good deal.

Paris
252.

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- 2 -

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Monday night. It is so hard to find time to write even a card these days. I've been all turned upside down in my work by Mr. Jaccuci's visit. He came two weeks and over ago and went away last Friday night. He is very nice and was charming to me but I was glad to see him [go] and get established again in my routine. We knocked around a good deal together. He took me to dinner several times. We made some visits together and we planned some things. It seems Mr. McClure is surely going to start the new magazine in May or June. I'm doing an article on the Pasteur Institute for it. I have hobnobbed with mad rabbits and quinea-pigs and I watched people inoculated for hydrophobia until I feel as if I'd been bitten myself. I've been at the Institute several times. The other day I saw Pasteur himself and had a talk with him and he gave me some pictures for the magazine. ~~Today~~ ^{Today} I went with a girl and we took some photos. There are all sorts of people there, always a group of Arabs. I had to pay the scamps today to get them to pose for me. You may live in a desert but you learn to beg all the same.

I've written you I think about getting a letter from Laura Seaver introducing Mr. Loutrard. He comes here to take charge of the Standard Oil Company's interests. Well, he sent the letter and I sent him word to come. He appeared Friday night in full dress, crush hat, opera coat, etc. I suppose he thought I must be somebody. He was much more taken back than I was when the girl showed him into my box of a room. It was awfully funny. I had no fire, wasn't dressed up, etc. But we got on famously and at the end of 3 hrs. he went home. Sunday he telegraphed me he was coming again. He did and took me to dinner. Well, it is the first time I've hobnobbed with a S.O.C. magnate. Really he's not bad and if he turns out so, no matter, for he's going home for his wife soon.

Paris
253.

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- 3 -

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The company are establishing works here, at Rouen, Marsailles, and I don't know where else, refineries. He's general director, has already bought 50 acres of land at Rouen. I suppose these are secrets and I prefer you shouldn't say anything about them as coming from me.

You see with all my cramped quarters, I have plenty of company. My handsome Swiss, Mrs. Vincent's friend, comes around often and takes me out. I am to dine with the descendants again this week. Tomorrow I go to see another literary woman. ^{By-and-by,} I hope it will all focalize and I'll find myself in a settled position. As it is, I rattle ahead in the blissful uncertainty of never knowing where my next month's money is coming from but really it always comes. And I'm really getting a good hold. I'll not be home yet awhile though I may still in Aug. We'll see.

I hope you'll all go to the Expe. if you're able to. But it will be awful hard work. I didn't care for it. It is Titusville I am sick for.

I received the note on the Walker failure. I've had no letter from Dot yet. Poor girl! How I pity her. She is so proud. It is an awful irony on protection. The tin-plate industry did it. The very industry McKnily claimed would be fostered by protection has ruined him. Oh, it's better to be poor. I'm sure of it. I'm going to stay so -- for several reasons. We'll all hustle around and pay up the family debts and then let the world wag.

I went to bed after that philosophic remark and now I'm hurrying up to get my letter into the mail.

I wrote about that article that Dr. F. was to send to Will. I have never seen it. Did he send it on? If so, send to me. A paper came from M. the other day with a notice of a little article I had written for McClure on

Paris
254.

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- 4 -

Paris
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35T
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Inanah, the mathematical prodigy. I think it must have been Dr. F. who let it go in since I'm sure otherwise it never would have gone. Unless, indeed, the Tribune has changed hands.

You say you do not see anything of mine now. The Chaut. articles come in the Spring or Summer. I do not know when the Bazaar begins the articles I'm doing for it. I think I shall get an article into the New England Magazine soon. I am not sure. Also there is often McClure stuff but I don't see much of that myself.

I must close. Write me very often and take good care of yourselves. Don't worry about me. I'm very well and am going to keep so, I'm sure.

Love to all.

Ida M. Tarbell