Typed by C. Tupper

Ada P. McCormick
Tucson, Arizona
April 8, 1946.

Letter from Ida Tarbell
to her Family -
Hotel de L'Europe, Lyons
20 May, 1893.

38T My Dear Family:-

I am sitting up in bed trying to write by a nasty little candle. I might have a lamp if I should stir the serving force of this hotel sufficiently, give them two or three fees and pay a franc extra when I settle my bills, but as I am here to make my fortune and not that of French hotel keepers and waste my time and wear out my eyes by my bougie.(?)

I think I wrote you last from Clos. But what did I tell you of that remarkable country? Did I tell you that the cows wear shoes and do the work of the farms instead of horses? did I describe the
39T yellow stone of which houses and walks are built and how the whole country looks like a big piece of terra cotta trimmed with green? Did I tell you what a curiosity I was there myself and how a woman insisted on calling me an African, etc. etc? I really dont know, but I'm sure I didn't tell you about the fête since that came after the letter went.

In inviting me to Clos Mme M. told me she would like to have me see the fête since it was an institution of Mme Roland's time. It undoubledly was of religious origin, but all pious ideas have disappeared since the Revolution and at present it is simply the May day fête of the young people of the village, the sole religious con-
40T nection being that it occurs on Ascension Sunday. The first I saw of it was Saturday when the committee appeared and put up a little band stand at the side of the court (I think I described to you how the house at Clos stands within walls, a big green court on one side

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and an English garden on the other. Sunday morning about 10 I heard music and went out with Mme. A band of five pieces - tambou - major ahead, marched in, followed by about 20 village boys from 10 to 25. They were the leaders of the fête come to take possession of the Clos. Behind them was the cavalry, three horses decorated with red ribbons. The chief marched up to Mme M and presented her to
41T the fête. She welcomed them and told them they were the masters. I didn't realize just what that meant until afternoon. Then I saw. At noon I saw Mme was dressed up so I pulled out my best silk gown with the lace waist. Mme said you must have roses to wear so we went out to the hedge of old-fashioned roses - Mme R's roses, we called them since it is certain they were there in her day and I decorated myself. Mme M. insisted even that I put them in my hair!! If you could have seen me! The guests preceded by the band began to arrive about 3 and by four everybody was dancing with a will. After an hour the music stopped and they went through a ceremony known
42T as the cuttung of the brioche - a brioche is a species of cake much used in France. The one on this occasion was about 3 feet in diameter and of this shape  a kind of big fried cake. It appeared first on the head of one of the fête officials who, band ahead marched, followed by fifty or so young people around the court. Then they stopped in the center where a table was placed and in the midst of the greatest silence and solemnity, cut the brioche. It was superb to see the gravity and dignity with which the head official swing in his big knife into the air and laid open his cake. He

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looked like a Roman priest making a sacrifice. The chef first offered
443 a plate of cake to Mme M, her sister and me for we were on the house steps watching the show and then passed it to the rest of the crowd. As there were 300 or 400 people I imagine not all had a bite, but everybody tried to get a crumb for the fete brioche is as sacred as the pain benit of the church.

When the dancing began and to my great surprize the chef came to ask me to dance. It would have been a great crime to have refused so I marched out boldly for a quadrille. You know dancing never was
444 my strong point. But I got through some how. One always says here if he makes a mistake that that isn't the way we do in our country" and so be excused. I not only gallopped through a quadrille but did a polka and got off so well that I began to believe that I could dance after all. It was a sight for my friends - I in my best gown, bedecked with roses dancing with a big French country boy in the court of Clos, 300 or 400 peasants looking on with more or less appreciation of this farmer from the land of the new grape vines and the best potatoes. The next day the fete went on all day. In the morning there was another ceremony. Mme being presented with a big brioche and she presenting them 20 frnacs to help in their expenses. In the afternoon more
445T more dancing and I assisted with a will nearly having my head whirled off. They dance by spinning around as fast as they can fly and after 10 minutes I not only saw stars but planets, comets and meteors. To pay me for my folly a big pleasant stepped on my foot so heavily that I've limped ever since. But it was great fun and I'll never do it again you

Paris
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may be sure. When Monday night came I was tired out and I had all the trouble in the world to pack my luggage for we were going to leave at 6 A. M. - it was necessary. I left Clos with a heavy heart for I had had such a good time and I had really found a friend in Mme
46T M. You can not imagine any one sweeter or kinder than she is and she is as full of fun and interest as a girl. I know we're going to be great friends. But isn't it droll! To think of my coming over here to work up Mme R. and becoming the friend of her great grand daughter! It is almost a romance.

From Clos I came directly here where I8ve been five days. It seemed awfully forlorn to settle in a strange hotel after the intimacy and friendliness of Clos but I pitched into the library the first day and found I was going to get a good many ideas at last here. After the library closed I concluded to hunt up the consulate and register
47T and to my great joy I found that the consul I had met in Paris was still there, that his wife and sister, the later of whom I know quite well were both here. Dr. Fairfield is a lovely kind old man and he put up his papers and went with me to his house where I drank tea with them and was invited to dejunier the next day with some Americans on the way from Paris to Rome. We had a charming time together. Every day since I've seen them - last night I dined there and I'm invited again for tomorrow dejunier - which is my last day here. I leave Monday morning early for Geneva.

I don't find Lyons very interesting as a town. The site is magnificent - the town lies in a valley, the high cliffs beyond and the Alps

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48T in the distance, but save the churches and the city hall and Academy, the buildings are absolutely stupid and there is no life at all. It is exactly like a big country town. Titusville is livlier. The churches are very interesting however and in the museums there are some superb things of the Italian and Flemish schools of painting - 15th and 16th centuries. To day I went with some ladies to see the silk weaving - not the machine work but in the private shops where a master workman owns the looms and lives [with] his workmen doing orders. Such superb stuffs I never saw. It is all hand work. We saw grenedines with velvet brocades. White moiré antique brocades, etc. etc. All the part of the city where we saw this is filled with high houses in each of which the apartments are filled with workmen owning from 1 to 10 looms. They
49T have their households beside their work rooms. I talked with two of them today about machines and hand work~~ppppp~~. They said we prefer to do hand work because we are independent. We work as we please and we obey no impertinent overseer. We earn less but we are free. I liked them better for it. It's my sentiment too, but I didn't tell them my experience. But I must stop. I could write twice as much if I had time, but my candle is almost out and it begins to drivel in such an idiotic way and I can't stand the sight of it any longer. I send you by this mail some flowers pressed at Clos, the little heart is made of oiled paper. Several of them put together are made into a lamp shade. I'll try to send you one for Mme M. and I are going to try outour hands at them. This was made at C. Plant the poppy seeds. They are of an enormous flame colored poppy. I never saw them but once before in Ohio.

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Uncle Beliour - whom Laura will remember - had them. How about the flood? I saw a telegram that there had been another! but no loss of life reported.

Love to all.

Ida M. Tarbell

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