31 Elm Street
Bloomfield, New Jersey

March 4, 1925.

My dear Miss Tarbell,

Miss Mary Van Kleeck of the Russell Sage Foundation has suggested that I write to you. Her permission to use her name and her faith in your readiness to help those who are in need of help have given me the temerity to ask your advice.

Miss Van Kleeck said to tell you my story and you would be able, better than anyone else, to tell me how I ought to proceed. Entire frankness has made the telling longer than I could wish, but since your advice will mean everything to me, I have not wished to omit anything that would make the situation clear. I realize how much I am asking in thus taking your time. Perhaps my heartful gratitude will make it seem worth while.

I have long cherished a secret desire to write, but until a year and a half ago never seemed to be able to get the least connection with anything more literary than reading and English courses at night at Columbia. When I began work I was forced to take the first and best paying position that presented itself. I think also I was afraid to encourage myself in what seemed, for me, impractical and romantic ideas. I, therefore, labored diligently in stenographic and secretarial work for nearly twelve years, my last position in this work being secretary to the president of the United States Fire Company, a position of responsibility and some prestige as such positions go. I believe it a correct estimate to call myself an expert stenographer and secretary.

About a year and a half ago I unexpectedly, and providentially it seems to me, had my first chance to do some work along the lines I had been hoping for, when I became assistant to Rev. William E. Gardner, D. D., Executive Secretary of the Department of Religious Education, 281 Fourth Avenue. Within a month or so after my arrival Dr. Gardner turned over to me practically the entire charge of editing the Department's magazine on religious education. Everything connected with this work was a joy to me, but most particularly when I was writing something for the magazine myself. While, of course, it was a small affair, I have the satisfaction of

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knowing that during this period it became better than it ever was before. More than anything else I think I owe what success I may have achieved in this work to a high standard of taste gained in reading the best authors. Your wonderful biography of Lincoln is included in this as well as some of your other works and they have afforded me the greatest pleasure.

Due to Dr. Gardner's resignation last November and several other resignations in the Department, it finally became necessary for me to leave and seek new work. I have only been out a week, but inasmuch as I understood the situation in the Department, made some inquiries about work several months ago. My first thought at that time was to get into a publishing house, where I thought I could be paid for my technical experience and perhaps find the chance to write as well. I had an introduction to the treasurer of the Review of Reviews Company, but he was so discouraging in the matter of salary that I did not dare go any farther. I had already written Mr. Funk, of Funk and Wagnalls, but have not received a reply. I have been receiving $2200 a year, which judged by my experience in business and compared with the salaries of my acquaintances seemed little enough, but apparently, it considerably frightened the two publishers I tried.

1890
1895
34

From my small experience of writers, I seem to be making a late start, for I am thirty-one years old, but I doubt if I can be happy at anything else. I should be afraid to think of trying were it not for the fact that all these years my mind has been working, and I believe it has something to give of its own. It is because I believe that I might have something to say that I am able to take courage in thinking I can learn how to say it.

A money sacrifice is difficult for me to make as I have others to consider, but if you should tell me that it is necessary for me to make it, but that by going to such and such a place or by beginning in such a way it would be worth while, I should feel that I ought to do it and then try to make it possible. I know quite well there is no royal road to success in any field, but sometimes there are opportunities if we know how to grasp them. I am so afraid of taking a secretarial position where I never could learn to write and so lose what seems to me the best thing that has ever come to me.

It seems strange and presumptuous that I should write you all this. I can only hope you will not agree with me in this, but may think me deserving of your kindly consideration.

Faithfully yours,

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
New York City.

Mildred P. Sinclair.

Mildred P. Sinclair

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