Chautauqua, New York
Box 591

My dear Miss Tarbell,

You may not remember me as being the girl who wanted to write your biography. I am still one of your ardent admirers. I have heard much about you from Joy Fuller who says that you were a friend of his mother.

You appeal to me as one who understands a girl better than any one else in this country does.

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

and I count that day well spent in which I have introduced you (thru your books) to any young girl.
Your "Business of Being a Woman" is my Bible - and some time I want to own more of your books.

But I am writing to ask your advice about my present problem and I feel that you will be glad to help me find my place in the world - some place where I can be one hundred per cent - efficient.

I will tell you to begin - that I am a graduate of Simmons College,

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Boston - and I have taught Cooking and Sewing for one year. My year was successful - in that I was an inspiration to the girls whom I taught. A man who is Judge in seven counties came to me and asked me to influence his daughters to go to College because I had more influence upon them than he did. When one of the little girls' mother died - the child came right to see me first because she seemed to sense the fact that my mother died when I was ten.

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I am twelve hundred dollars in debt for my education, therefore I was obliged to find a better paying position — I was assured by three Superintendents and Dr Blood of Simmons that I could and ought to command a better salary. Therefore I resigned, and the Commission of Education voluntarily wrote a recommendation for me which they all signed.

I then came to Chautauqua where I have spent three whole summers with Miss Anna

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Barrows of Teachers College, acting as an assistant. Miss Barrows feels that I should have a position in which my love of humanity and the gift for inspiring people, which God has given me would help a large number of people.

Because you believe in Home Economics and because you see the whole world in its true perspective I know that you can give me a suggestion which will unravel this knot of perplexity.

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How could I correlate my work with Social Science in such a way that would help the largest number of people?

You have already been a great help and inspiration to me and I thank you. I hope that I am not imposing too much in asking your advice.

Very sincerely yours,
Alva Jane Emerson

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