Digital Images, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1880-1999, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Greenville, Pa. 11/3/25
Gen. Del.

Miss Ida C.M. Tarbell
New York

Dear Miss Tarbell: For the past fifteen years I have been in the hands of the K.K.K. and what I have endured tongue can not tell.
At that time an invalid brother and I were left alone on a farm of 171 acres in Irwin P.O. Venango Co., the farm is underlaid with coal of the very best quality. For the past forty or fifty years there has been an out-law gang doing buisness in the southern part of the P.O. while in the northern part there is a gang equally as bad but they were not organized, they have consolidated since the World War and we have not only the gangsters but people who were considered the bone and sinew of the country were ready to cast their lot with them when they were assured they could reap the

over

benefits of the organization and not be found out. I had a brother-in-law living in western Ohio who came on to help us arrange our affairs; I did not understand his attitude and his advice I could not take, in the course of a few years I found out he was a member of the K.K.K. and was working under orders.

The methods they use makes it impossible to prove any thing and they deny belonging to the organization if accused.

We did not sell our farm for just any price we could get for it as my brother-in-law advised us to but in the course of time we saw we might just as well stay there as any place the tax would not amount to any more than rent for for a house in some village where we would not be as well contented as in our own home

The second year we were there I was talking with a man about selling; I says there are some of my neighbors would like to

Digital Image 2007 The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 8969944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

have our farms, he replied "Yes indeed they would but they do not intend to pay you much for it they intend to starve you out," I laughed had no idea what they could do; the things they have done and are still doing far surpass the doings of the Bender family or the Jesse James Gang.

"Our farm was centrally located level and fertile; if we had not been preyed upon we could have enjoyed all the comforts of life but as it was we lived from hand to mouth and they had succeeded in starving us out. There were some things we were obliged to buy of the farmers; when they found out we were in the market for something the orders would go around that they were not to sell to us we always had the money and paid the price without quibbling if we had any thing to sell they saw we either did not sell it or else did not get the market price. I could have made money raising

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

turkeys but they were taken from the roost at night and driven from place to place during the day so that I had to quit raising them.

Nine years ago there was a Coal Co. prospecting for coal some miles west of us; my brother could not understand why they did not come into our neighborhood as there are thousands of acres of coal in a solid body. The next year he met a man who had been helping the company take up leases; he told my brother their man had been to see our neighbor who wanted our farm and the discouraged him about coming in and got him out of the neighborhood without our seeing him.

In a few months my brother had a letter from the man who had been helping lease saying he would be on in a few days with a geologist to look over the coal proposition.

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

When they came they found just what they were looking for; the top vein is stripping coal four feet in thickness; we had worked this vein but the water had drowned us out the second vein is at a depth of eighty feet and is more than five feet in thickness; and you may know the coal is the very best quality. This vein we struck while drilling for gas and my brother had a sample of the coal which he was showing to every one who came around; the coal Co did not rest until they got that out of his hands.

Two years this coming December my brother died; the gang had designs on him for years; they tried to lure him out into a secluded place on the farm and they had men from the cities in the vicinity; he realized if he had gone he never would have come in.

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

then they tried to get men to stay over night with us, the first one they sent I gave them away by questions he asked, he knew the parties had the heart to do the things they were hiring him to do if that was no danger. they picked me up and brought me here the next day after my brothers funeral without consulting my wishes: and I have found out their object in trying to get rid of my brother. I have a Nephew living there who was raised in our home and whom I love dearly, he has a wife & three lovely children. He brought me to this home they are members of the K's and were working under orders, they were to make it so unpleasant for me that I would have to go back to my home after they had been through my house and arranged things so that I could not look upon the place securely then they

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

could kick me off without any trouble, I put up with the abuse of my nephew's wife because I understood her motive, finally she ordered me away and I supposed I would have to go. I went to a catholic woman who had lived in part of their house and asked her if she knew of any of her people whom I might get to go out with me or with whom I might stay ~~with~~ She did not know of any one so I went back and told my nephew he had brought me here and he would have to keep me until I could get our affairs settled.

In the course of time I was out one afternoon and his wife threw my belongings out on the porch and locked the door. A woman across the street saw me sitting on the porch and send a boy to tell me to come over to her house. She had a room she wanted to rent

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

I asked what she wanted for it she replied the man who had had it paid six and one half dollars per mo. but that I might have it for six. I moved in and the first week I gave her one dollar and a half also the second week, the third week she looked at me and laughed. I wondered what she meant. the next week there was a lady from the city came and stayed over night I awakened in the night and heard some one outside my door. I got up and light the fire. the next day I payed my rent. She says "what do you mean by giving me this dollar and a half" I replied it is my weeks rent. She says you're not getting that room for six dollars it is twelve dollars." her daughter was present and I knew I had nothing else to do than pay so wrote her out a check. The Klan had been on the job.

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

I left and went to a sanitarium where I thought the lady in charge was every thing that could be desired but by the time I had been there a week I found out she was one of the same order. My sister from Ohio had been writing me to come and play with her her husband having died in the meantime, but when my niece locked the door on me she received orders not to harbor me so she wrote me not to come said she would pay for a room in Greenville for me; that was not enough she had to write to my nephew also so the K's would know for sure she had complied with their demands. I left the Sanitarium as soon as I found out I was in the hands of my enemies and went to Mercer thinking I might get employment but found the same organization at work. There was nothing for me to do but go to my sisters and to my astonishment I found she and all

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

her family belong to the K's well what I endured was something awful I owed her pa or my brother and I had given him a joint-note; the gang among them an old lawyer were telling him he would never get his money so to keep peace I gave him my individual note but it was no relief all winter the leaders of the gang were after my sister trying to persuade her to shut me out. She is well to do and there is no one there with her but a granddaughter. On the 12th of May I came back to Pennsylvania I had no place to go and very little money. I succeeded in getting employment in an Orphan's Home where in a very short time I could have earned money to pay the tax on the farm which they intend to sell the first of the year if they are not paid.

I had not been there more than a week until there was a man came around one evening enquiring for the preacher

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

who is the superintendent he was acting a part some of them said they thought he had been drinking but I understood his object the Supt wife were away for a two weeks vacation and when they returned my stay was short.

The day before they paid me off they were away all day and I knew they had been in conference with my enemies. A sister of the Supt a widow of fast middle age was in the room when I received my notice. I said I understood; that I ought not to have to "live here I had a good home of my own but could not stay in it on account of such people as you, She replied what do you need with all that amount of money if you had a couple of thousand dollars you could go to an Old Lady's Home and have every thing nice, well that told the story our farm is worth one hundred thousand dollars but I had

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

not said any thing to any one about the value of it and my neighbors had planned for my going to the Old Ladies Home A few weeks ago while a farmer of this county was returning home with a load of coal he was shot from ambush and killed; the only reason they could give for the act was that he was an out spoken man, had been assisting a neighbor threshing and remarked that there was only one man of whom he was afraid.

There had been a school house burned and stock poisoned in the same vicinity some time ago; they said he had not taken sides in either case but had remained neutral.

Earlier in the season there had been a man lured into an isolated place in the same neighborhood and shot in his auto. They put up a farce of trying to apprehend the culprits but failed and all these things did not create as much excitement as

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

the shooting of a dog. There were two men (brothers) from the T[illegible]. where I was raised moved onto a farm adjoining the farmer a short time before and their house burned a short time after and they moved back near my old home; they claimed they heard the shot. There are eight brothers in the family and four girls and they are all active members of the Klan

I was slated to go just one week before the farmer but a Kind Providence in whom I am trusting protected me. I am a cousin of John J. Henderson of the Superior Court and when my neighbors and the Coal Co. failed to indict me they went down to Pittsburgh and enlisted the aid of the Judge and his three brothers; it would not be long until his second term would expire and every man who comes out for office now has to be endorsed by the K.K.K. I had the greatest confidence in

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

them so gave them the information the Coal Co. had been making an effort to wrest from us and from that on my lot has been harder.

All office holders business men professional men and laboring men belong to them and it is impossible to do any business; I was executrix of my father's will and appointed to settle my brothers estate but I am forestalled at every move. they have looted my home from garret to cellar and I am obliged to rent a room from some of these people and the only reason they let me have one is the hope they will be able to get the reward they have offered for my demise. I do my own cooking; with all the druggists and doctors among them it is very easy to get dope and for years they have been trying to get me by that method as well as other methods When they started in all they wanted was the farm but now they know I know

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

them and like the Farmer are out spoken and they dont want any one around who understands their darkways I would like to have my experience written up; it would make a volume of some size then I would be ready to give up the fight.

I am elderly and plain looking and they reason that I do not need money. I have some pet charities that I would like to remember among them the Childrens Home at Mont Fabon the Bowery Mission & Salvation Army then I have two nephews whom I would like to leave a home in a manner that they could not squander it; they are neither one very strong I was thinking of writing to some of the city papers for your address when I read your article in the Gazette Times of recent date. At the time you were writing up the Standard Oil Co, I read some of your articles.

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

No doubt you are deluged with letters of this character and if I have ever stepped the bounds of propriety I hope you will pardon me. I have been trusting that God in some way would deliver me out of their hands. I can't see how he can do it but I know there are no impossibilities with Him.

Sincerely Yours

Miss Minnie Henderson

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