Paris, France Aug 1891

(Is a Girl Safe in Paris?)

My Dear Union Signal:-

When I announced to my friends that I proposed to spend a year or two in Paris for study, I was met with dubious looks. "It isn't safe: "You will be annoyed constantly." "It is a wicked city - for women." One ~~dear~~ fearful friend woman even declared "It is not respectable for a young woman to go to Paris alone" Friends who had been abroad and "done" the city - in a week or less said: "We've been there, we know. Paris is no place for women students." The warnings were listened to respectfully: ~~I saw you~~; but I came, convinced that if a woman never had lived alone and studied, in Paris without annoyance, it was time one did. ~~I for~~

In the short time that I have been in the city - my experience has been so contrary to the warnings of my American friends that I ~~feel~~ would like to give it for the sake of others who may want to come here but who are dissuaded by their own or others fears. ~~that~~ - I have not been in the turbulent parts of the city - to be sure, the faubourgs of St Antoine, Ménil-Montant, the slums, as you would call them in Chicago, but one ~~ca~~ could not judge of any city - fairly by their experiences there. I have been at all hours from 7 in the morning until 9 at night - through the Latin Quarter, through the business streets, in shops, hotels, churches, parks everywhere I wanted to go, and I have yet to receive a bold look or annoying word. There is perfect respect accorded here to the woman, young or old who minds her own business, who sees nothing while she sees everything, and who preserves her countenance. She can go to the restaurants -

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and find she is, by no means, the only woman ~~alone~~ ~~in~~ who is dining alone. In spite of ~~[illegible]~~ the warnings of the "proper" she may ride on the top of the omnibuses and find capital company, English, American, German as well as French (shall be a goose if she does not impose the imperiale, as the top of the vehicle is called, for it is an unequalled place for sight-seeing) She can ride on the river boats and be sure beforehand of ~~being treated with~~ ~~[illegible]~~ respect and even differential care ~~being cared for with deference~~ from by French people, who are always very particular that l'étranger be well treated, as well as that he pay ~~pay~~ well for his sustenance and his service. She can wander through the parks, sit in Notre Dame absorbing its lights and shadows, its massive mystery, mingle with the crowds in the boulevards, do what she will so long as she ~~[illegible]~~ preserves an air of ~~knowing~~ having her own business and attending to it.

My conclusion is by no means unsupported. Many girls here confirm it ~~with their~~ by experiences of several months or years. An artist of my acquaintance tells me that she lived alone here for nearly a year, never had a companion for her street-rambles, went back and forth frequently from a friend's home a long distance from her boarding house after S. P. M. riding always in omnibuses and always without annoyance and with what is better even, a feeling of safety. This feeling of safety is ~~in fact~~ quite unexpected to me, but I certainly have it already. It is in the air. ~~I have~~ New York ~~and~~ Chicago, either of them give ~~no~~ a stranger in their streets less sense of protection than I have here. But remember these are first impressions.

I have been trying to find a reason for the bad idea that most Americans carry away of ~~Paris~~. the

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safety of Paris for women. I think it is largely due to the fact that they come here convinced that Paris is a terrible place and that they for ~~seek confirmation~~ look for ~~try to see~~ things which will confirm their notion ~~preconceived ideas~~. They see the freedom with which men and women greet each other ~~kiss on both cheeks~~ in the streets, ~~watch lovers walking with their arms about each other or with hands clasped~~, and promptly conclude that ~~morals are~~ reserve ~~modesty~~ is unknown in Paris. ~~The~~ books ~~and~~ pictures, ~~the~~ habits ~~are so~~ are easy to find which are shocking to American ideas of decency and taste, ~~but~~ and travelers do watch for these things. But it is not fair to argue that because customs are different and the vicious more on the surface there does not exist purity and uprightness. It does exist and in so large a mesure that it rules the city really. The reputation for wickedness which Paris has, is supported by nemenduous foundations no doubt, but I doubt whether she is worse than large cities with us, if as bad certainly her surface is not alarming. La promenade des anglais

~~They are used to it~~

~~I have found that many Americans making short visits here go on the general principle that~~ ~~It cannot be long however I believe before the women about the~~ ~~for~~ It takes but a short time of study in these streets discover the importance which women occupy in the business, social, and reform work of the city. When that is once understood, the idea that women ~~are~~ run risks by appearing in public alone is at once dissapated. It argues too that the barriers before the young French woman will not always remain as high as they are now. The shops are full of women. Those popular restaurants the Duval and bouillon establishments have women for waiters, sweet-faced, good women, too most of them. The factories employ many. In the Tobacco manufactory which you know is a government monopoly there are 1900. That ubiquitous Cerberus the concierge

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10. How the French keep up their roads.

11. A day with a Paris policeman. His round. His trials. His training. His pay etc.

12. Sunday Outings.

TERMS.

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is almost invariably a woman, even in the Champs-Elysées. ~~where she~~ In reforms women are very active. The McAll mission stations are largely conducted by women who go about among all sorts of people in the worst of the faubourgs, and at all hours. Most of the Gospel temperance work here is conducted by women. Miss Howard who has done so much for students in the Latin Quarter ~~has~~ continues her work with success and lends a ~~most~~ much needed influence among the thousands of careless brilliant young fellows of that interesting section. The presence of so many young women in the schools, however, ~~is~~ has done most ~~of~~ to ~~redeem~~ redeem the Students' Quarter to the use of womankind. ~~In the school of medicine there are~~

The French Working Woman's Mission under the control of Madame Dalencourt ~~does much~~ is a greatly needed work of which I hope to write you particularly after a time. Mme Dalencourt uses the McAll rooms mainly for her gatherings and she possesses that fertility of invention in getting at people which is even more indispensable in this land than in America. One of her prettiest ideas is a "School of Dolls" where each little girl receives a doll when she has completed a wardrobe for it. The device sounds. the doll opens the heart and Mme Dalencourt is quick to fill it with wise counsels and holy words. The little one now more often than not the mother comes into the mothers' meeting, the father ~~into~~ the evening mission services, the brother to the temperance sessions and soon a family is under the

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influence of the Gospel.

There is Miss De Broen work at Belleville, the home for French servants, ~~the which~~ the effort to improve the condition of French shopwomen instituted by ~~the~~ Miss Atterbury of New York and many more, which I shall hope to give you some definite ideas in the future. Here they all go to show that Paris has its quota of active, cultured, devoted women going about its streets in search of knowledge, in ~~search~~ of pursuance of daily duties, in efforts to relieve pain, ~~&~~ to correct faults, and to teach righteousness in precisely the same way that women work in New York, in Chicago, in all American places. It is due in no small degree to their efforts that the treasures ~~are~~ of the city ~~are often so freely~~ safe can be studied safely by the woman who if she comes here at all must come alone.

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