

10 rue de Regard - Paris.

Dear Cousin Lucy and Cousin Pierre - You have

been wondering why I have not written probably
and I have been waiting each week to be able
to write definitely - or have time to write at all.
The week after I wrote you, a letter from home
said I could stay on here and probably "Army could"
come next year, if there were anything to be gained,
and the next week after, it was definitely announ-
ced that the Beaux Arts Examinations would be
open to women this time - It was short notice,
about $4\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 weeks, and a great deal to do,
Descriptive Geometry entirely, besides the Esquisse
work for the Architecture, modeling, cast drawing,
Algebra, Geometry, one examination written, one
oral, and the same in history from the Communauté
to modern times - I was about ready for a
vacation from the winter's work, and did not
go into it very fresh and vigorous, and had
I known they had changed and would have another

in October,
think I might have waited, though as they say it
is necessary to fail once, to know how to take the
examinations, perhaps it was best anyway - I did
pass them all, but not with high enough rank -
Perhaps it would amuse you to tell you of some
of them. The first was in Architecture. You
are going from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. in logs, and I
enclose a copy of the Programme with a book by
this mail. It was very hot weather, and it
was impossible to close an eye the night before, so
was up before five, got breakfast, and was down
at the school a little after seven, as the head guard
had said if I came early he would let me up
before the men began to arrive, - it being supposed
there were two Americans to enter. But when I got
there, it turned out the other was a myth - there
was a single individual sitting with his drawing board
at the base of the 'statue pillar' in the middle of the
first court, and a guard who ^{said} ~~had~~ they had made a
mistake, and I would be let in but - So as people
began to arrive, I went up to the Inas and walked
up and down and up, seeing the students arrive, in
all sorts of regalia, by ones, in groups, until it
seemed an almost endless time and number - It
was nearly half past eight before things quieted
down & one returned back - I was put in a
box - a little 6x8 room in the roof of the part
over the Surlings office - there is a suite of perhaps
30 to 50 rooms up there - It had a table & stool &

close as furnishings, with a window out on the court
of the bas-relief frieze with the fountain in the center. I
did not notice particularly just then that the entire
ceiling was skylight, with no way of covering it, but
when the sun arrived a few minutes later, and looked
through on your head all day with no escape,
then, being an exceedingly hot day, you did notice,
and the trickle of the water in the court below,
was aggravating - sort of incitement to injury. The
officials were very obliging and polite. They
left no guard as for the men, simply said
if I left the suite of rooms connected with
mine, I would be hors de Concours. The
programme was very difficult for the 12 hours,
for it has to be drawn very carefully - I was
very tired, and got so nervous I absolutely
could not keep the ink in the drawing pen or
get a point on a pencil. In spite of that
I had my plan finished and the elevation
about finished by 4 o'clock, when I took up
the scale with a sudden suspicion, and
found I had made a mistake calculating,
as I cannot yet think in the metres, and
the whole thing was too low, though in
proportion. That just finished all hopes - I
rubbed out the 1st story, and simply put in the
ground and only thing I could. Utterly bad -
but it was eight and the garde there - I went
home and sat down on a sofa to rest a

minute before dinner as I had not had a thing
all day - and woke just as I was ^{on coming} ~~in~~ all
in, at half past three in the morning. A couple
of days afterwards they exhibited the Concours in
the Salle Melopom, as always, and you should
have seen Mr. de Moncel's face. He said I'd never
done anything so bad since with him, and he
was sure I'd not passed though the plan was
good. So I went home and was so sure I
must wait to see if I had or not, until a couple
of days after I met one of the students and heard
by accident that I had, by two points more than
necessary - all on the plan. The ups and downs
were very funny. There were 376 drawings entered,
and only 30 or 40 students to be admitted, - small
chance - especially for foreigners as they are limited
to 5 or 10, it is not known yet which number
for this time. There was No. 376. They eliminated
111 on this examination, and there were 69
ahead of me. The next two I was not
ready for, for the drawing at night has
been from life only, and I had not touched
day since home, but they came out pretty
well, but you should have seen the French
of the history paper, or seen the trouble in the
examiner's eyes in the oral. The oral mathematics
broke down about a hundred at least. It's the
most trying ordeal for its simplicity, and seems
to depend more on the amount of nerve than of

knowledge - There were thirteen examined before me
the day I came up, and every one failed entirely -
those big strong fellows would get up, tremble,
turn white, clutch their hands, and seem to have
no thinking power left at all - It seems very
silly, but I think you would do the same - it
seems a sort of contagion - Being the last out
the list, I'd hoped to be almost alone, but perfectly
free from mischief, though they were perfectly polite
and gentlemanly, and have been throughout, the
room kept filling up all the morning, until when
I was called there was a room full - I tried
to pretend I was not afraid, and perfectly
steady, and actually believed it until at the
end of the first problem I discovered that
my hand was rattling in the air, and the
discovery so surprised me, I could not do any
more mathematics - it was enough for a pretty
good mark, but you see so many did
nothing - The list has not been made out
officially yet, but the students get their values by
going to the Secretary - He said this morning only
30 would probably be taken - and I am about 42 or
43 - so you see it would be impossible in any
case - None of those received have tried them less
than twice, many 3 - 4 - 5 or 6 times - Every one
takes their defeat in the most cheerful way, for
you are always with the majority at least -

That is perhaps too much to have said about it,
but you see it has filled ones life pretty completely.
the last seven weeks - Next time perhaps it will
be better results - it does not seem that one
could now be so nervous and tired again, even
when some of these Frenchmen up for their 6th
trial do the same thing -

The last weeks have been the most home
like ones since with you - Two San Francisco girls,
sisters, one studying painting and the other sewing
have a pleasant little apartment on this old
street, very quiet like the court opposite, - The
painter wanted to go to Italy, but did not
want to leave the other alone, so asked me if I
would come and stay until August - So as there
was a girl very ill indeed in the room next
mine at the club, I was very glad to come. We
do our own cooking, with a femme de menage
at a few cents an hour to clean up - It
seems very funny to have your billetter (676) opp
your front door - but it certainly is compact.

Mr & Mrs Maybuck, and the Mr & Mrs Brown
I expected to come on with, are here, and two
Sundays have been with them out into the country -
the 4th of July to Saint Germain-en-Laye, and
yesterday - to Chartres - where especially sight after

sight would make me think of Louis Perre, and
wish he were enjoying it too. It is not a bit
disappointing, is it? At least in parts - it seemed
so much finer than the pictures or casts, like the
whole of the porch on the side of the "Evreux", or
the noble sense of the whole right transept porch
with its long organ-piped unfinished towers - we
went up the inner tower, and waiting till they
finished ringing the bells with their feet, asked
the bell ringer if we could go up in the other
tower, because we had gotten into a discussion
over how it was built, and how thick those
stones cut into shingles outside, were. He took us
through the roof, over the vaulting, and into the
back of the tower. Then did you go up the
corridor stairs? They were so decayed, you
clutched every now and then at the framework,
but we were all too surprised to say more than
"well", when we first reached the top - That
great spire just a smooth, hollow, empty pyramid,
was a brace or floor, arch or other tie, from
top to bottom - and the stones at the base only
16 inches thick - It seemed like ^{inside} a great empty
lime kiln, and spooky too, with the only light
from the places where one stone was left out here
and there. You sort of held your breath for fear
it would come down. We went to St Agnan's and
St Pierre - but did not have time to see the old houses

by the river. I would like to go to stay longer sketching
some time.

Friday I am going out to a place Madame
de Monds has found with a French friend of hers
near their country place at Bugurich in the
Chautilly forest - to stay for two weeks, perhaps a
month, and rest up before studying for the next
examinations. She says the lady has nine stater
boarders, has a very pretty villa with garden
and horses, and it sounds pleasant - all at a
most remarkably small price. It's a good deal in
hope too, of speaking better French.

I have been wondering if you were away,
or would be at home - And sometimes have
played that I opened the door when the
bell rang, and there you were - Is Mr
Napoleon entirely well, and the baby? Will you
kindly remember me to your sisters, Cousin Lucy?

Very lovingly,

Isabel Norton

July 9th 1897.



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