Letter: Anna M. Bigelow to Editor, Woman's Home Companion, May 4, 1915

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The "Woman's Home Companion",  
361 Fourth Avenue, 
New York City.

Gentlemen:

How would you like to be told that a girl of the "Twenty-Cent-Dinner" type, throws your magazine across the room with disgust after reading Miss Tarbell's absurd discourse in the May issue? I feel safe in making the assertion that the majority of girls, working for a song, who read the article, did in spirit, if not in word, this very thing.

What does Miss Tarbell know about the undernourished, undeveloped minds and bodies of the several millions of wage-earning girls and women in this country? Her statement—"having done it for the major portion of THREE HAPPY AND PROFITABLE YEARS in a great city, the writer flatly disputes this assertion", that one who must work and cater to one cannot live upon much less than twenty-cent dinners. (The underlining is my own.) What is THREE YEARS of a lark, 'doing profitable work', compared with centuries of starvation— for a girl of the average wage of $6.00 a week (this is the average wage of over 9,000,000 girls and women in this country) is but the product, in thousands of cases, of the undernourished minds and bodies of her ancestors for generations! Mary Lyon—Susan B. Anthony indeed! Likely comparisons to the mill or factory girl of today who works at a task that wrecks her mind and stunts her moral, spiritual and physical growth? Who would not go through fire and water and a few other things to accomplish an ideal? But what are you going to do with girls who do not even know the meaning of the word ideal, let alone the privilege of working to attain a coveted goal?

I have discussed this article with a dozen girls, girls who are above the level of the mill and factory girl, and each has made some such remark as this:— "The old story of some one trying to preach about something she doesn't know anything about!"

Why do you not give girls what they want? What is there possibly in an article of this kind to help a girl solve her problems and make the most of her hard conditions? Nothing! If
you really care for the millions of wage-earning girls and women
in this country, you will give us something worthwhile and not
stuff we long to throw in the fire.

This article has one redeeming feature and it is not in
the article itself. It shows that you are beginning to realize
that the problems of the girls and women who are engaged in gainful
occupations, are the most vital problems of our nation, and when a
magazine has awakened to that fact it is entering upon its greatest
work. It is people you want to reach—not things.

We want facts not fiction. Have you anything to give us?

Very truly yours,

Anna M. Bigelow

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