A. L. A. Booklist
Madison, Wis.

My dear Miss Tarbell:-

Of course you are at liberty to quote anything I say - and I wish I could say something worth while. I'm dazed by this world. I was so very long out of it - just about nine years altogether I was too much absorbed in my own affairs to observe anything - and now I feel like Rip Van Winkle. First - you must know that we met and organized an association opposed to woman suffrage. And confidentially, our association is the best reason on earth for not permitting women to vote. We haven't accomplished anything, and we never shall, because nobody wants to come out and fight - nor even play politics in one of the fifty-seven ways I learned when I was a Washington correspondent. Mrs. Scott came and delivered a delightful address in the assembly chamber at the capitol, and while I was listening to her, I kept

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-pened to see a miss Stearns, who had in-
terrupted the meeting at which Mrs Catt
spoke in Milwaukee. Never except on the
face of a woman I watched one night
at Lenox Lick while she lost more than
a thousand dollars at roulette, have I seen
such a look of naked passion. There was
something bestial and indecent about it.
I can't possibly describe it. Something much
deeper than the vote is involved in all
this fuss - some sort of world spirit of
revolt. Miss Stearns looked exactly like
the women who sat near the guillotine
knitting. What's got into women? The only
comfort I find in our obviously futile
association is that the women seem nor-
-mal - and the active suffragists don't.
And I don't want to be a woman of to-
morrow. Yesterday suits me better. I'm al-
-most ready to go ask somebody to let the
suffragists have it so they'll hush. Their
noise scares me. Jane Addams has killed
us in this state, apparently, yet she, too,
seems infected with the strange mania
- the fixed idea that legislation will mend
matters. I've just succeeded in getting my
chief to discard a suffrage book

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translated from the German. The author mentions somewhere that as a result of woman suffrage in our American state prostitution is positively prohibited by law. Sais murder, and arsenic too. Fault in legislation is the most dangerous form of fanaticism, and apparently that's what suffragists have. You've said the whole thing in the end of your preface to The Book of Woman's Power — but somehow my chief's complacency over that legal prohibition made me shiver. She says "it ought to be prohibited." But still she consented to discard the book. The weird worries me, but there it's a very very long time since Jeharah remarked plainly that he was sorry he'd made man, so the worry isn't original with me. The library weird worries me. It's a menace to society. All the books children are allowed to read are chosen for them by a lot of children's librarians who have been carefully taught exactly what the immature mind delights in. When I was in the Chicago library I worked in the open shelves, and it was my joyous privilege to take every child I saw firmly by

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the hand and lead it away from children's books. The library as an educational influence is pure slush. It stands between children and books. Yesterday a children's librarian said to me, "If American mothers only did their duty, there'd be no need of children's librarians," and I wanted to tell her that if I were her mother for two minutes I'd turn her over my knee and spank her. And ever and ever so many people still out of jail don't read books. I'm tired of hearing about the Child and Woman and the American Mother. Why can't somebody be let alone once while? (Right here my daughter who is doing Iphigenia auf Tauris interrupts me sputteringly. "Here she's been so awfully reluctant to tell him one thing about herself and as soon as she gets started she tells him all about herself and her family and her cousins and everybody on earth she's ever met, and if that's not like a woman!") And were there sororities in the world when I was on earth before? I recall going to college a year, but sororities were dim and hazy things that did not occupy my attention.

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2; Now they accuse the chief thing, in a university which is supposed to be a continuation of the free school system. I was waited on lately by the head of a sorority house who came to ask me to pledge Elizabeth to the Dingbats or something of the sort. I left it to Elizabeth who declined. I thought a sorority was a sort of simple club but it isn't. I have one girl friend who actually resigned from one. It cost her here - belonging - about a hundred dollars a year - which is more than the Century Association costs my brother-in-law. She tells me she had to take very solemn vows, quite as solemn, she thinks, as the marriage vows. For two things only could she be expelled - divulging the sorority's secrets and immoral conduct. And when she wanted to resign the secretary from New York had to come out here and it was quite as difficult, she says, to resign as it is to get a divorce. What is all this nonsense? Our sorority is noted for being the best dressed, one for being the most exclusive one for being most popular with men. There's even one, I hear, that prides itself

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on the high standing of its members, but one hears little of it. Now, what place has that sort of thing in a free school? Where's the power that permits girls of eighteen to bind themselves by solemn vows to a life long sisterhood? The sorority elder who came to see me ventured to remark that the Omega something's had paid Elizabeth much attention, asking her there several times to dinner, so that really they had every reason to think she'd feel herself bound to — and with great finesse I interrupted her there. I told her Elizabeth thought she'd been merely the casual ~~pure~~ guest of one of the girls at their usual dinner, and that — well, I think I made it clear that Elizabeth doesn't need any assistance socially or in her lessons from any set of Greek letters — and then the girl wailed out." But we want to get her before any other sorority finds out about her." And that's exactly what was under it all. Isn't there any education in schools any more? No, it's all secret societies and exclusiveness and bad English. Probably I'm unduly interested in my daughter. At any rate, I hope to ~~have~~ let her confine her studies to languages and history till such time

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as I can send her to an art school. She has talent it- is said for drawing. And she's a serene cool person who gets what- she wants, and isn't at all affected by anybody's point- of view.

I must ask your pardon. I suppose I had something definite- to tell you when I started but- I've forgotten what it- was. I'm getting all the impressions down and when I retire to the convent I've already picked out- I shall write over so many books about- the world. Wouldn't it- be too unspeakably dreadful if one had to feel that one had made it-?

Sincerely,

Ruth Kimball Gardiner

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