March 10, 1914 The Uneasy Women

~~self consciousness with its attending~~

A disquieting disturbing phemonenon of comtemporary life is the frequency with which the American woman gathers to discuss herself It is disquieting because it argues self-consciousness and self-consciousness is always serious:- a handicap to both happiness and efficiency. It indicates that one is not sure of himself, that he is not confident that he is going in the right direction, ~~and~~ that generally he is not working comfortably and harmoniously in the company in which he finds himself.

The keenest analysis of self-consciousness in literature is Kipling's ship that found herself. In this remarkable story the parts of a newly launched ship combine in a protest against their situation. Bolt, rivet and beam each cries out that it is not getting a fair show, that its worth ~~value~~ is not recognized. Each charges the other of shirking, of incroaching, or of unfair crowding. The ship makes its first voyage with its every part in violent revolt. Kipling's story might be paraphrased to make a fairly accurate picture of a large and influential group of the American women of to-day chafing, resisting and straining at the social and political bonds that hold her.

The exhibits of her restlessness are variform, their expressions not always definite, and she as an individual ~~herself~~ is more often than not unconscious that her malady is anything but personal, a fate peculiar ro her and not to her sex, a proof of some special individual sensitiveness or of some uncommon situation.

Particularly intense at period of greatest freedom patriotic woman have ever known.

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Perhaps the most familiar indications of her unrest is her half-hearted respect for the natural business of being a woman. If one will go through the literature of the agitation for women's rights which has been going on in this country for the last fifty years, he will find a half-apology for sex constantly coming up. The natural corallary of the apology has been the argument that women must have this or that right in order to make them more worth while in the scheme of things. The robust, old-fashioned way that our grandmothers had of being proud that they were women, proud of their families, proud of their children, of never questioning their own importance, has, too generally passed away. You will find on all sides women who are the mothers of big families, who are past masters in the art of conducting a household, who do in every week of their lives work calling for the highest degree of judgment, of tact, of self control of all superior intellectual and moral qualities, who yet will tell you humably that they never have done anything in the world. These women, who many of them, exercise qualities which would run great businesses, will even feel themselves inferior in the presence of a successful teacher or business woman. And in turn the successful teacher will congr-atulate herself on the fact that she at least has had a career. For the career, by which she means the ability to carry some form of individual achievement apart from the family, to a finish which would bring personal reward and applause, has been the test which the restless woman has been applying to life. If she has this individual career life

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

would be happy and worth-while: if you did not have it, it was de-
Will she does her life will be

feated.

One of the arguments which the opposition to her ambition raised was that she had neither the physical nor mental equipment for doing a man's work. If woman had been a little more familiar with the part she has played in the history of the world she would have known this was not true. There has never been a time in the world's history so far as I have been able to discover, when there were not women who were not doing all tasks usually done by men from tilling fields to ruling kingdoms and doing them quite as well as the men themselves. She did not realize, also, that it had been repeatedly demonstrated in the world's history that ~~if circumstances drove a woman into the tasks that usually belong to men, as since the world began they have, it is to her credit, but~~ it is not an advantage to society that she should perform unusual and abnormal occupations. Society is best served by normal natural living of its members.

But the restless of the world rarely appeal to history - generally they act without prespective, treating their problems and situations exactly as if they were new to the world instead of being as old as the world. Instead of denying the charge and summoning the past for proof, the woman makes a feverish effort to prove that she could do whatever a man could - could study his books (and we have that foolish thing, the woman's college modelled after the man's), could imitate his labor, could practise his profession, could equal him in money getting and in governing. For

Digital Image, 2015, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

a half-century one of the serious undertakings of the American woman has been to demonstrate that she can do a man's work. A large part of the space in her journals of this period has been given over to a record of what may be called the accidental occupations of women. For instance, the fact that women were successful as soldiers for longer or shorter periods has been made much of. Naturally a woman is in an abnormal position as a soldier. She has not the physical strenght to fill the duties for any lenght of time, nor is she needed as a soldier, while she is very much needed in tasks equally important to the state outside of the ranks; that is, in war, woman has her own peculiar tasks and if she goes soldiering they are refused. What this effort to prove herself able to do man's tasks has really amounted to is to encourage a large number of women to spend their energy in efforts to differentiate themselves from their sex - not to develope the sex. It has been hard on the individuals who have fallen victims to the delusion, enormously wasteful of both energy and happiness.

~~Another indication of the feminine unrest lies in the revolt against permanent location. --- There has grown up in the United States an absentee woman, not unlike the absentee~~

Now the really significant side to these tendencies, and I want to be understood as noting these things purely as tendencies, and not by any means as saying that they are universal; that is, that all women are self conscious and uncertain of themselves, that all women apologize for the fact that they are women, all are trying to live as men or to imitate them. Not by any means. I

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

simply mean that these are native characteristics of American women and that those who are taking the sex seriously have met recognized them. The significant side to these tendencies of women is that they persist in spite of the fact of the emancipation of women. I may safely say that we have in this country an emancipated women. By that I mean that it has come about that an American woman if she will, may fit herself for practically any profession or any trade, that she may practice it without serious opposition, that she amy come and go as she will, and she may express her opinion either on the platform or through the ress as freely as the men. If she has not the ballot generally she has it partially and the getting of it is entirely in her hands; that is, she has only to persuade the inhabitants of a state that it will be better for the community that she vote, than that she does not. She has the appeal to Legislature and Congress and all the regular avenues of influencing public opinion.

The fact is this, that never at any time in the world's history has there been a woman so free to come and go, to develope her tastes, and her individuality as the American woman of to-day. Moreover there has never been at any time in any country so large a number of women who had leisure and at the same time has wealth and education.

The contrast between the women of today and her predecessor who might be called the women of 1776, meaning of course the women that we had at the beginning of this Republic, the women who were pre-

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

dominant up to at least the middle of the 19th century — The contrast between her and us of today is striking and suggestive. The field of action of our predecessor was strictly limited: first, she was responsible for her household. The running of a household a hundred or more years ago was a serious piece of executive work; it meant producing much of what the family consumed, both in food and clothes. It meant directing a considerable body of servants. It meant too, taking almost complete charge of the education of the children. In a much larger degree than today, the household of one hundred years ago felt its responsibility for dependent numbers of the family. The uncle and the cousin and the aunt as well as the grandfather and grandmother were considered a part of any household unless they were otherwise provided for. The woman of 1776 too, was expected to make her household more or less of a social center. Hospitality was as much a part of her function as looking after her larder. The result was that the household was a center [illegible] social impulse, on the whole, to a much larger degree than it is today. The woman too, in that time had a recognized moral responsibility not only in her own immediate circle but to the community. She was held herself by chruch and by society to a most rigid system of conduct. She in turn held all those about her to the same path which she was supposed to tread. It was severe but it was wholesome, no candid student of that day can deny. Under that regime the general moral laxity which all of us so much deplore in present-day society, was

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

out of the question, for the man or woman guilty of it, was summarily ostrasized. It was a system which had its disvantages. It was weak in sympathy for the wrong-doer, it fostered concealment, hypocrosy often, it evaded the facts of life, but it had the merit of making fewer wrong-doers than the flabby attitude that prevails today. more unpopular that it is under today.

Another recognized responsibility of this woman was that of caring for the sick and the weak, who came within her circle. She was a nurse, she was something of a physican, and she was the practical adviser and friend of the suffering and the poor about her. Read the records of the women of 1776 and you will find that they expected to look after those in their circle who were grief-stricken or disease stricken. Martha Washington going about Valley Forge from morning until night with her basket on her arm, looking after the sick and starving soldiers was doing very simply, what, on a larger scale did at Mt. Vernon. She was doing what all trained women of that time expected to do as a part of their natural duty in life, that is, looking after those that needed help. Serious They occupied much the same place towards the unfortunate, in their neighborhoods that the settlement workers of today does to the same class in their neighborhood.

These were the responsibilities society had put upon her, and which she accepted as belonging to her and which she discharged so soberly and fully, believing them entirely worth while. Remember too, that she had to discharge these duties within very definite lines, that the tools allowed her were strictly limited, no higher

their them

It must

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

education was provided for her, no professional training; she could not go on the platform to express her views, without the severest censure. To be sure she did frequently write, but it was always with something of an apology and she had to go through a process of adjustment before she could bring herself to do it naturally and freely. Moreover the freedom of movement, which we take as a matter of course today was then largely denied her. She would no more have thought of travelling from Boston to the nearest town unattended than she would have thought of taking the platform to harangue against the British. She was chaperoned and guarded at every point.

Now these limitations were accepted by women as a class, as reasonable and necessary. Very largely so, I believe, because they had such profound respect for the duties which society and the chruch had turned over to them, because they saw such large opportunity for usefulness in them, because they believed them of such fundamental importance to society.

Nor did these limitations on her field of action and on her methods prevent the development of great women. Quite as many of unusual achievement on the whole were developed under that system as we are producing today under our emancipated system. Take for example, Abagail Adams. She is an admirable type of the kind of women that the old system produced. Her education was entirely that of the fire side, excepting perhaps a few months with the local school mistresses of the Massachusetts town in which she was

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

born. Few college bred women of today read with the same concentration and appreciation, a stiff book, as Abagail Adams. As a child she was held strictly to the performances of certain duties that it was considered necessary for a girl. At the same time she was admitted freely to the conversation which went around the fire side and the table, a means of education which we unfortunately greatly underestimate today. Children are too generally excluded from the society of their Elders with the result that their minds are much longer in developing. Indeed I believe this is largely the reason why so few of our young people can really talk on serious questions. The story that has been going the rounds of the press of the two young English girls who came to an American college for education and wrote home that they were bored to death because they found no girls there who could talk seriously and interestingly, is worth taking to heart. The English girl is from an early age much associated with the elder members of the family, She learns what good conversation is and is expected to take part in it.. On the contrary, we as a rule, do not talk ourselves or do not expect our young people to share in it. Abagail Adams had too, access to good and serious books; something that our grand mothers insisted in their daughters doing was reading really serious books, so that the habit of reading became fixed. When she married John Adams, which she did when she was 18 or 19, she had at once serious responsibilities thrown on her hands. The direction of the household including a large family. She bore several sons and personally very largely

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

directed their education, even their political education. When Mr. Adams was called to aid in the establishment of a new government, Mrs. Adams took entire charge of the family and of the business at home. Later in turn she was put in many trying positions. She went abroad with her husband when he represented country in turn at Paris and in London and she was obliged to take the difficult social position which his appointment involved. Later Mr. Adams was elected President of the United States and Mrs. Adams became the mistress of the White House. Still later, her son became President of the United States and she not only was an ex-President's wife but the mother of a President. Through all of these changing scenes, she was the same clear-minded, courageous, cheerful, firm woman, absolutely consistent to her ideals, absolutely unmoved by superficial motives. She was not only all these things but at the same time a sprightly and lovable person one can see from the one series of her published letters, for throughout her life Mrs. Adams wrote freely to those nearest to her, keeping them and herself informed of the things which pertained to their lives. These letters form altogether the best picture of a woman's life in the latter part of the 18th century and the first part of the 19th centruy which we have. They are a genuine literary achievement. They show the kind of achievement that the women under the old system was capable of, while she at the same time remained serene, unconscious and entirely convinced that the part which she had been called upon to play, required no apologies, was entirely worth while, both for herself and for those she loved and for the State.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

(1)

Few American women of today with all the real advantages of emancipation have anything like the sureness of themselves anything like the serenity of mind that Mrs. Adams kept through life. And yet their emancipation has its roots, the very reasons of its being with Abigail Adams and her friend Mercy Warren and thegroup of serious-minded women of their day who understood and sympathized with them. It is well for us to ask ourselves now andthen What was at the bottom of the American woman's emancipation? Nothing else than the recognition that if the new republician government was to be permanent the woman must understand it, must practices its principles in all her relations, create in her home an atmosphere favorable to its growth and above all train her childrenin its fundamentals.

The American woman's emancipation was necessary if the vision of government our fathers saw 135 years ago was to be realized. From the start the comparatively few men and women who reaaly sensed what was going on - thatmthe Revolution was more than a shuffling off of a tyrannical master, that it was an attempt to prove whether it was possible for people to rule themselves - these men and women saw that there must be fundamental changes in the Education and in the service of women as well as men if the thing was to work. I do not mean that they saw this fully or that they ever formulated it adequately but that there were new duties for women in the new situations of the nation is constantly hinted at in the discussions of the period and is implied in all the great expressions of principle, and it is fitting that we who are the products of their struggles and aspirations and visions should do what they never fully did, extract their ideas of what woman ought to make of herself and what she must contribute if the new Republic was to succeed.

This woman was expectCd first to play a far greater part than her predecessor had ever played. Her predecessor had not been a producer within the family circle. The lady of the old regime was what Olive Schriner calls bluntly a Parasite". The new woman was to pay her way. Thrift was her great economic function the practice of it, the teaching of it to those under her, theexample of it to the com

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M Tarbell Collection, 1899-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

munity, that is the problem of the cost of living was largely in her hands. To a degree quite new to the world, the woan who had not a home in which to exercise her natural ecomonic function was expected to work for self-support. Almost at once a new liberality towards the things a woman could properly do was exhibited. For self-reliance women was recognized as one of the basic democratic virtues. It was bad to be a parasite, as bad for woman as for man. One demand made upon her was that she educate herself sufficiently to give a thorough home training in the moral and political ideas of democracy. The ~~underfixing of the new scheme was education~~ - to make a real democrat you had to begin ~~with the child~~ - everybody saw that unless the child learned by example and precept the great principle of equality, liberty and fraternity, he was going to remain what by nature we all are, ~~an~~ imperious, demanding ~~and~~ self-seeking. The whole scheme must fail if his education failed. It is not too much to say that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution ~~were framed up~~ in the minds of certain early Democrat~~s~~ women. ~~If she failed this they would fail.~~ It would be worked out according to the way she played her part. The responsibility came in the fact that ~~the~~ work was one that ~~in the main~~ nobody could take off her hands.

~~But the merging of the old types of womanhood into a new dominanting type, putting upon this new present~~ the responsibility ~~of both acting and teaching of natural thrift and natural morality~~ required a ~~fitting~~ entirely different from that which had been hers.

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.



She must be given education and liberty. The woman saw this and the story of her efforts to meet the requirements is one of the noblest in histroy. This is but one of the many that women underwent in their struggle to make themselves fit to discharge the tasks the new nation had laid upon them. But what has happened. In the very pr Why is it? May it not be largely, if not entirely due to the fact that in this process which we call emancipation, she has lost sight of the purpose of emancipation, Interested in acquiring new tools, she has come to believe the tools more important than the thing which she was to use it for. She has fallen into an error of our time. In the joy and exaltation of gaining her needed freedom of movement, of choice, liberty of thought and cultivation of intellect, she has forgotten the responsibilities that go with freedom and cultivation.
wiped out the sober sense of national obligation, The new way was life, the old way was bondage. She questioned its worthwhileness and concluded that it was unworthN of her metal. She has sought to substitute others for them. The result has been that she has ceased to grasp clearly the very purpose of her own emancipation and that she has naturally failed to discharge some of the most imperative demands the nation had made upon her. Take for instance this matter which I have spoken of as thrift - by by which I mean getting the most out of an income. It is notorious that as a people we do not achieve the desirable result. How much of this

failure is due to the American woman? ~~What is our economic function after all?~~ There are two factors in the income. The first factor is getting it and the second is using it, and it is the women who use it as a rule, that is, the econo ic function of a woman as a rule is spending money which has be en earned by somebody else.

I am not forgetting that large numbers of women in this country earn money, earn it not alone for themselves but in hundreds of thousands of cases, to help others. We hav e according ti our last census about 30,000,000 bread winners over ten years of age in the United States, one-sixth or about 5,000,000 of these are women. But we all know that a comparatively small percentage of these five million are permanent bread winners. In every trade, the bread-earning women, the self-supporting woman is a transient. Not long ago I had occasion to look into the telephone service of t the country, largely equipped as you know by girls. Now the working life of the telephone girl is not over three years at present.

~~You take the working life of the shop girl, the factory girl, the domestic servant, and perhaps a small percentage,~~ It is equally true that the shop girl, the factory, the domestic servant , and in the majority of cases the t-eacher is not a pemanent bread winer. They marry, and their economic function becomes largely the managing of the income. As long as the family and industrial life ~~is~~ are organized as ~~it is~~ they all today, this is necessarily true and I believe that all thoughtful people ~~wish it to be so~~ and believe that it is

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

best that it shouldbe so, and deplore the fact that so many women ever should have to give their forces, to earning money forthe family.

Now if women are spending money it becomes of the utmost importance to know whether they are spending it wisely, that is, if they know how to manage incomes so as to get full value for every dollar: if they know how to so divide incomes that the disproportionate amounts are not spent on unnecessary and decorative things so that its disproportationate amounts do not go into amusements and into transient things that are not essentil. But does the American woman as a rule handle money with any such wisdom. ~~We all know that she does not.~~

The truth is that we have not as yet applied ourselves scientifically and thoroughly to the problem of thrifty living. Our education helps us very little. How many of us were ever taught properly to handle money? How many of us who know how to handle it were not obliged to learn it by series of humiliating mistakes. And yet many of us were taught all of the mathematics from primary arithmetic to differential calculus. Never however, were we shown that mathematics had any real application to our life We may have taken honors in geometry and trigonometry and know nothing about handling our personal accounts, This is but an example of so much of our education, particularly for girls, that does not prepare them for living. We say it isa mental training, but mental trainingwhich does not teach one to put his mind on his individual problems is as good for nothing as building a house in

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

which one never expects to live. The foolishness of all this unrelated teaching is growing upon the country. Particularly in the West do we find colleges and schools for girls, attempting to show that the sciences and the arts and mathematics really have some relation to the life that they are about to live. That Hygiene means something personal, that chemistry has a relation to the family life, that all things which are given them to study, really mean something in the scheme of things.

Not only do we fail ourselves to take seriously the question of thrift and in insisting that our schools teach girls so that they will at least understand that handling money properly is one of the things that is to be expected of a well trained young woman, but scarcely anywhere in this country are organized women of independent means doing what they ought, to teach thrift to the multitude of poor women who must provide for their households from the daily wages of their husbands. We are too apt to forget that the mass of the people in this country must live on incomes which average only a few hundred dollars. The average income of a worker in the great Steel Trust, where we have the highest paid labor in the country, is only about $775. It is obvious that to feed and clothe and give a roof to a family on such an income is a difficult task, requiring, if this be done with any kind of satisfaction, a knowledge of purchasing, of the quality of materials, of cooking, of dress making, etc., yet almost nowhere in the country have we anything but the most trivial and sporadic efforts to give this training to the women who need it so much.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Another point at which the nation has not had the whole-hearted co-operation it ~~expected of women is making of domestic service a dignified and desirable pursuit~~. One of the fundamental ideas of a nation such as we have been trying to make is the dignity of all kinds of useful work. In a government by the people, everything which needs to be done must in the nature of things be respected. Now we inherited from our predecessors a system in which many employments were regarded as menial, they were marks of class inferiority. The Democratic notion was to wipe out class - to grade people by worth of mind and character, not by their trades or their incomes or their lineage. The problem of making the domestic servant a domestic helper, a person to be respected according to her merits was in the hands of women. There could be in the nature of the task no rules for it. It could only be done by creating in the household a genuine Democratic spirit. There can be no denying that the problem was difficult and elusive. Also there can be no denying that we have flatly failed to solve it. A more chaotic condition exists today in this great essential department of national industry than is to be found in any other and I am by no means forgetting the textile factory and the sweat shop when I say this. The work is generally dispised by those who go into it and there is no other honest work in the this country which so belittles socially the person ~~who goes into it~~.

Generally speaking the girl suffers more socially than the man ~~doing~~ household service.

~~More serious still there are no organized at~~

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

More serious still there are no organized attempts being made to solve the problem as ~~there are the problem~~ of factory and sweat shop. Yet there are ~~double the number of~~ women earning their livings in domestic service ~~that there are~~ in factories. The service is vastly more imprtant to society and it should ~~hæ~~ also ~~great~~ opportunties for development in it which the factory has not. Why when this is true is the service dispised? Why do women prefer the factory to it. Why have ~~we~~ women failed to work out the domestic service? Was it a ~~chimerical~~ undertaking? Or finding it difficult have we shirked it?

Our great grandmothers i.e. the serious ones among them, who comprehended that a new regime meant a new attitude towards all social relations, attempted it. ~~Probably~~ all ~~of us~~ of New England ancestry have traditions of the relation of the "helper" to the fa family. But there was a crushing interference with general democratic habits existing in this country from the start and that was slavery. In the South ~~of course~~ all service was performed by slaves. In many parts of the North at the founding of the Republic in Connecticut, in New York, New Jersey, the slaves were held. It was practically impossible to work out a democratic system of domestic service side by side with slavery, although our great grandmothers made valiant efforts to do so. Slavery passed but we were impeded by the fact that the liberated slave was still a slave in spirit and that his mistress, North and South, was still an aristocrat in her treatment of him. With this situation to cope with ~~our pred~~

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

#28 1/2



~~to cope with~~ our problem was still further complicated by immigration.

For years we have been over-run by thousands of untrained girls who ~~were candidates for citizenship themselves and who~~ are probably to be heads of American homes and mothers of American citizens. Most of them are of good healthy, honest industrious stock but they are ignorant of our ways and ideas. The natural place for these girls to get their initiation into American Democracy is in the American household. The ~~civic~~ duty of American women towards these foreign girls is plainly to help them to understand our ideals. The difficulty of this is apparent but the failure to accomplish has been due lesss to its difficulty than to the fact that not one women in 10,000 has recognized that she had an obligation to make a fit citizen of the girls who came into her home. Generally speaking the foreign servant girl has been exploited in this country almost if not quite as ruthlessly and unintellegently as the foreign factory girl and the foreign steel mill worker. The result has been that the girl soon acquires a confused grotesque notion of her place. She soon becomes insolent, ~~"she's as good as you." "she knows her rights" "she's nobody's slave"~~. Domestic ~~service~~ which ought to be the best school for the new-come woman becomes the worst. ~~She soon is~~ and dissatisfied, grows more and more indifferent to the quality of her work and to the cultivation of right relation. She acquires the bad habit of changing often and as soon as possible leaves the home for the factory, ~~Her attitude has become characteristic of the service~~. It is not too sweeping to say that the morals, the customs and the quality of

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

This was a task in itself which would have staggered any body of reformers less exalted than the few among the American Revolutionists who felt most deeply the necessity for it. In those days as since the beginning of organized society and perhaps before it, the lady, as Mrs. Putman says in her altogether charming book on the subject has "very nearly covered the surface of womenhood". The status of women has always and is today complicated by her existence. She was to be emerged ~~with~~ only a new type - the American Woman. #7

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

24
25



domestix service in America today has been taken from the hands of the American woman and is settled by girls and women who dispise the trade.

There is nothing more important in American industry today t than to change all this - to rescue this great and important trade from its low estate, to dignify it and to make it respected and desirable. Solve this problem and you release thousands of women from the intolerable bondage of the factory and the shop, women who would naturally go into some form of house service, if they could do it without loss of self-respect. Solve it and you release the home from an irritation which constantly is ruining its atmosphere and in many cases breaking it up. Solve it and you do more to crush the spirit of snobbery and aristocracy which always thrive when any form of useful labor is dispised, than you could do by another service to this nation.

Difficult? It is one of the most difficult tasks in the nation but that fact is what makes it so worth the metal. The original conception of the task of women in the new nation included beside the economic obligation to practise and teach thrift, and the social obligation to create a Democratic atmosphere in which all sorts of transmutations were to be affacted in the woman herself, the obligation to establish the child on a sound moral basis. She must anchor him to principles. If he understood integrity as a man it was because she had done her work well. If she did not do this properly he was bound to be a disturbance and a danger when he was turned over to soceity and to politics and called upon to take his

part in running the ~~new~~ machine, To send defective steel to a gun maker ~~would be~~ is no more fatal to the making of safe guns than turning out boys who were shifty and tricky, ~~would be~~ is to making an effective honest community. ~~She was the only one who could do the work.~~ There is no question that very many women atthe stat of the Republicc regarded this as the most important duty placed on any part of the community. Her struggle for educatin was ~~as I have tried to say~~ based largely on her serious conception of the importance to the nation of training the young properly. But ~~taking it bye and large, I believe it is not an exaggeration to say that she has shirked it,~~ appaled by the very seriousness of it, she has shifted it to others shoulders - shoulders which were waiting to help her work out the problem but which could never be a substitute. She has turned over the child to the teacher secular and religious and ~~fan~~ fancied that he might be made a man of integrity by an elaborate system of teachin in a mass. What has been the result of this general shifting of responsibility. Has it no relation to the general lowering of our commercial and political morality. For the ~~last ten~~ years we have been bombarded with evidence of ~~almost~~ an appalling natural indifference to the moral quality of tranactions, ~~if material success was involved which would~~ have made every man and woman who loves the land, feels like hiding his head in shame. It is not too much to say that the revelations of corruption in our American cities, the use of town councils, State legislature and even of the Federal Governemnt in the interests of private business has discredited the democratic system throughout the world. It has given more material for those of other lands who despise democracy to

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Digital Image, 2011, Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.



to sneer at us than anything that has yet happened inhthis land. And all of this has come about under the regime of the emancipated woman. Are we in no way responsoble for it? If we had kept the early ideals of the woman's part, the young citizen's training as clearly before our eyes as we have kept some of our wants and needs could there have been so disastrous a condition? As a woman I say in humiliation that I believe that no small part of our present low ploitical and commercial standards is due to the fact that we women have ceased to realize the fundamentals and all important character of this duty to our country. For my part I believe it is a duty in which we must take a fresh hold - for which we must get a fresh baptism - a fresh enthusism or we shall be counted guilty of the same treason as those who corrupt youth by vicious - political and business practices. *

And may it not be that if the American woman could be aroused to see again the dignity and importance which lie in this business of being a woman in a Democracy, her restlessness and self-concsiousness as a sex would disappear, that she would forget herself in the welfare of the whole.

The failure to fulfil your function under the scheme in which you live always produces discontent. Let the American woman grasp fully the real significance of her place in a Democracy, a place so essential that Democracy must be overthrown unless she rises to it - a part which man is not equipped to play and which he ought not to be asked to play and she will cease to apologize for herself - cease to look with envy on man's occupations. She will rise to her part and we shall

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.



have the new woman of which we have talked so long. Learning, business careers - intellectual achievements - the existance of political and industrial functions - none of these things are more than incidentals in the national task of women. Her great task is to prepare the citizen - to hand over to man the material without which he cannot operate the governmental plan he has devised.

The tools for this are in her hands. Its calls for education and the nation has provided it.

It calls for freedom of movement and expression and we have them. It calls for ability to organize, to discuss the problems, to work for whatever changes are essential. We are developing this ability. It may be that it calls for the vote, and I do not myself see this, ~~and I fear we complicate unnecessarily our work, freedom, and organization by agitating suffrage, we think by taking on intricate and unsatisfactory obligations of politics, but~~ as it as it may be, it is certain that we shall have the vote everywhere as rapidly as not a majority but an approximate half of the women themselves feel the need of it.

What we have not learned is that education, freedom, organization agitation and suffrage are but tools to an end, what we have to do is formulate that end so nobly and perfectly that the woman may understand it. When this comes the most important step in our emancipation will be taken, the woman will cease to discuss herself. She will loose her self-consciousness in the realization of the greatness of the task to which the nation calls her and she will go forth with clear eyes and pure heart.