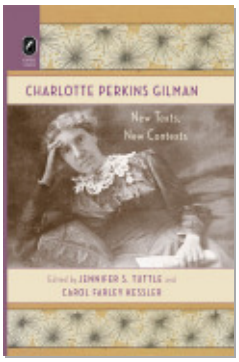
6. “The Same Revulsion against Them All”



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"The Same Revul

Ida Tarbell and Charlotte Perkins

Suffrage Dialogue

ALETA FEINSOD CANE

In the summer of 1914, just as the Great War was al
universal suffrage had been enacted in the United Stat
frage movement was battered by a deep-pocketed campa
ment XIX to the Constitution and was wearied by the fo
of the anti-suffrage arguments. Articles, speeches, and m
1912 dialogue between Ida Tarbell (1857–1944) and Charlot
man is one of the more interesting examples of the argumen
the lengthy discourse, with their characteristic good humor (at
suffragists published the following unsigned piece in the Na
sean for June 18, 1916. Titled "Our Own Twelve Anti-Suf
Why Woman Should Not be Enfranchised," it reads as follow

> Because no woman will leave her domestic duties to vote.
> Because no woman who votes will attend to her domestic duti
> Because it will make dissension between husband and wife.
> Because every wife will vote exactly as her husband does.
> Because bad women will corrupt our politics.
> Because bad politics will corrupt our women.
> Because women have no power of organization.
> Because women will found themselves a woman's party.

> Because men and women are so different that they must have different duties.
> Because men and women are so much alike that men with one vote can express themselves and us, too. (qtd. in Camhi 181)

This *Tennessean* tidbit satirizes some of the assertions made by Ida Tarbell in her "Uneasy Woman" series for the *American Magazine*, begun in January 1912. It was, arguably, the most influential anti-suffrage statement put forward during the Progressive Era. Tarbell's six essays attempt to discredit feminist and suffragist ideals that Charlotte Perkins Gilman had been writing and speaking about for over a decade. Gilman responded to the first four of these articles beginning with the February 1912 issue of *The Forerunner.* The dialogue created by these articles opens a window through which to examine the anti-feminist and anti-suffrage currents present in Progressive Era thought. Furthermore, the study of these articles from within the context of their individual periodicals affords us a larger, more rounded conception of the social, political, and economic moment in which these ideas were disseminated.

The dialogue between Tarbell and Gilman dramatically underscores the significance of reading these articles in their original periodicals rather than simply in the books or anthologies in which they subsequently appeared. In their recent essay "The Rise of Periodical Studies," Sean Latham and Robert Scholes cite social and cultural critic Cary Nelson's important statement that "periodicals should be read as texts that have a unity different from but comparable with that of individual books" (517). *The Forerunner* and the *American Magazine* serve as examples of this distinct unity. Both Gilman and Tarbell were writers and, more importantly here, editors of their respective periodicals. Each had authority over which materials would be published and the position within the periodical that each item would take. The stories, essays, poems, and serialized fiction, and their individual placement, serve as a *basso continuo* under the melodic themes of their arguments. Gilman's choice of articles on suffrage and serialization of "Our Brains and What Ails Them," one of her three revisions of *Human Work* (1904),[1] as well as her reviews, poems, serialized fiction, and stories, all extol the virtues of suffrage, the self-empowered working woman, and women who come to the aid of their less able sisters. They represent a marked contrast to the choices Tarbell made for the *American Magazine*'s content with which she surrounds her "Uneasy Woman" articles. Tarbell chose biographies of contemporary women that celebrated women's modesty, virtue, and adherence to their traditional roles. The magazine also features fiction that relies heavily on conventional marriage plots and happy homemaker vignettes. To study the

dialogue around the "Uneasy Woman" series within the larger context of the entire *Forerunner* and *American Magazine* is to see the importance of the periodical as the discrete artifact that it is.

The Forerunner delivered Gilman's fiction, polemics, reviews, and poetry from 1909 through 1916. It was a progressive, feminist, and pro-suffrage periodical totally written, edited, and published by Gilman herself. Her monthly "Comment and Review" feature afforded her space and time to respond to the social and political currents articulated in other contemporary periodicals. In this way, she participated in a dialogue with the significant thinkers and writers of her time. The "Comment and Review" columns kept selected names in the readership's mind and brought issues into discussion in a more balanced way than today's televised shouting matches. In 1912, both Gilman and Tarbell were well known to the public. Gilman published the widely read and much discussed *Women and Economics* in 1898. Between 1912 and 1914 her lectures on "The Larger Feminism" both in New York and in London received wide international press coverage. She was considered one of the most famous public intellectuals of her time. Critic Larry Ceplair categorizes these years as "probably . . . the apex" of Gilman's career (192).[2]

Tarbell, too, had reached the height of her fame at that point, as she was well known and highly regarded as the author of the famous exposé of John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil. She was a muckraking journalist and an editor on the staff of *McClure's* magazine. Subsequently she was one of the owners, editors, and writers of the *American Magazine,* which she and her *McClure's* colleagues (including John Philips, Lincoln Steffens, and Ray Stannard Baker) formed when they left Samuel McClure's employment.

The *American Magazine* staff seemed to have left their investigative zeal at *McClure's.* They had sensed the change in the political winds characterized in a speech by the progressive Theodore Roosevelt who—quoting John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*—was the first to use the term "muckrake" pejoratively in reference to investigative journalists. He said,

> Now, it is very necessary that we should not flinch from seeing what is vile and debasing. . . . But the man who never does anything else, who never thinks or speaks or writes save of his feats with the muckrake, speedily becomes, not a help to society, not an incitement to good, but one of the most potent forces of evil. (qtd. in Kaplan 151)

The muckrakers' moment had passed. The *American Magazine*'s writer/owners sought to tone down the progressive rhetoric in their periodical. For

example, instead of articles exposing corporate or government corruption and collusion, they published a year-long hagiography of Wisconsin's Progressive senator, Robert La Follette. Ray Stannard Baker (famed for his articles on municipal graft, such as "The Shame of the Cities," which led to the creation of many local good government organizations and better oversight of the way cities were run and their money disbursed) had to adopt a pseudonym (David Grayson) for a long series of cheerful essays filled with platitudes and homely philosophies. The essays had such titles as "Adventures in Friendship" and "Adventures in Solitude." The *American Magazine* was neither fish nor fowl, neither a red blooded muckraking magazine like *McClure's* nor a conservative periodical such as *The Saturday Evening Post*. An interesting metaphor for the political position of the magazine is an article appearing in the March 1912 issue. Writer Albert J. Nock lauds Francis Galton's work as the next great step in the science of evolution.[3] Galton (Darwin's cousin) used photography, phrenology, and racist speculation to proclaim the white, Anglo-Saxon as the purest racial type and the end-product of evolution. At the *American Magazine,* Sam McClure's old muckrakers set out to re-create the best part of his magazine, its incisive investigative reporting, only presenting it more gently, or maybe more genteelly. Instead, they took what was revolutionary and turned it into something reactionary masquerading as something original, much as Galton took the paradigm-shifting science of evolution and turned it into something unscientific and with nasty political ramifications.

Tarbell's series, "The Uneasy Woman," depicts men as victims and as under siege from unhappy women who blame men for their own unhappiness. Men were to be preeminent according to Tarbell, and it was woman's natural role to make that possible. She wrote, "Man," who challenges the world "in an eternal effort to conquer, understand, and reduce to order both nature and his fellows," needs a place to rest "where his head is not in danger, his heart is not harassed. Woman, by the virtue of the business nature assigns her, has always been theoretically the maker and keeper of the necessary place of peace" ("The Uneasy Woman" 259).

It is often surprising to the contemporary reader to encounter the defining debates of the Progressive Era. Roosevelt, a Progressive politician, rang the death knell for muckraking. Jane Addams, a champion of the immigrant and the under-served lower class, suggested that lynching might be excused sometimes as a form of southern chivalry.[4] Gilman, who was famous for her outspoken pacifism, became a hawk during the Great War. The startling dialogue between Gilman and Tarbell on the issues of feminism and suffrage

are but one more of the surprises of that era. Who today would believe that Ida Tarbell, a famous, college-educated, single, childless, self-supporting, and self-sufficient writer and editor, would be a vocal anti-feminist and anti-suffragist? But, as she wrote to John Philips, her publisher, her own studies about women's participation in the French Revolution had made her decidedly reactionary. She said that she believed women's "intensity and implacability" (qtd. in Camhi 176) made them a liability to the progress of humankind. Tarbell's stereotyped and remarkably unscientific, undocumented arguments against her contemporaries' struggle for the vote were carefully refuted by Gilman's more logical and well-documented responses.

Before examining the actual dialogue between Tarbell and Gilman, a brief overview of the anti-suffrage movement seems in order. The earliest official anti-suffragist group was the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women (MAOFESW) founded in 1882. By 1900 similar groups had formed in New York, Illinois, California, South Dakota, Washington, and Oregon. They coalesced into the National Association Opposed to Women Suffrage in 1911 with headquarters in New York City. Middle- and upper-class white Protestant women (along with a smattering of foreign-born Catholic women), and the institution of the Catholic Church in America, felt threatened by feminist views on equality in marriage, women's education, work outside the home, and dress reform. The "Anti's," as they referred to themselves, felt that such notions "unsexed" women and detracted from their moral sway over the Christian home. Such attitudes hearken back to ideas of Republican Motherhood and True Womanhood. The former taught that woman's true work was to raise thoughtful, educated sons who would vote wisely and serve the nation well. The latter notion promoted woman's role in the home as moral preceptor and creator of a place of peace for harried, overworked husbands.[5] Suffragist ideas like those of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, which Tarbell and other anti-suffragists derided as too strident, threatened the autonomy that the "Anti's" believed was their birthright as mothers and homemakers. They perceived Progressive ideas of women's roles, and especially the coming of the New Woman, as threatening to their comfortable status quo and as subversive to their religious belief that man was the head of his household as Christ was the head of his church. In her essay "'Better Citizens Without the Ballot': American Anti-Suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era," Manuela Thurner argues that the "Anti's" believed that women could be apolitical and thereby more powerful as agents of change. When Florence Kelley wrote that she saw the "Anti's" as "shirks" who were too "comfortable," the anti-suffragist Sarah C. Preston responded that the "Anti's" were "disinterested,

public-spirited citizens who give their time and service . . . without the hope of political reward or preference" (qtd. in Thurner 208). Additionally, Mrs. J. B. Gilifan of the Minnesota Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage wrote, "Wherever woman's influence, counsel or work is needed by the community, there will you find her, so far with little thought of political beliefs. . . . The pedestals they are said to stand upon move them into all the demands of the community" (qtd. in Thurner 210).[6] The "pedestals" upon which women were said to stand, apolitically, sound suspiciously like a throwback to the purported elevated status of women within the separate sphere of home. Her very diction marks Gilifan as less committed to social action than to maintaining the position of moral superiority, or "the pedestal" that separate spheres supposedly afforded to women. Furthermore, the idea that educated, active women would take money from men with well-defined political and financial agendas in order publicly to assert that women are more powerful with no political agency seems disingenuous, at the very least.

Suffragists did not perceive the strength, the wealth, or the organization of their opposition until around 1896, and even then they viewed such opposition as a positive force that would galvanize suffragists to redouble their zeal. As early as 1885, *The Woman's Journal,* whose editor was Alice Stone Blackwell, published the following observation:

> The annual hearing of remonstrants promote woman suffrage in many ways. It excites discussion: it generally finishes the conversion of some waverers to the right side, and it invariably makes the friends of suffrage indignant and stirs them up to redoubled zeal. Last, but not least, it brings forth a crop of argumentative papers or set speeches against woman suffrage which are an arsenal of weapons for the suffragists during the following year. (qtd. in Camhi 180)

The women's "Anti" group was but a shadow and a front for the more powerful men's anti-suffrage movement. This men's group was well financed and politically connected. It was funded by industrialists and the Catholic Church and was led by J. P. Morgan's son-in-law, Everett P. Wheeler, who was corporate counsel for many large business groups. Those corporations supported anti-suffrage votes in Congress and the Senate. New York's Senator Wadsworth continually voted against federal votes for women long after his own constituents had enfranchised New York state women. Similarly, Senator Weeks of Massachusetts had a consistent anti-suffrage voting record. Both these men accepted large campaign contributions from Wheeler's National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Interestingly, although men always

had the power to vote on suffrage and the money to buy those votes, the face and voice of the anti-suffrage movement was always presented as a woman's. Time and again, whenever there was a forum or a government hearing, it was a woman who was sent to present the anti-suffrage argument, making it seem as though women were anxious to keep themselves disenfranchised.

Lobbyists, most particularly from the deep-pocketed alcohol distilleries and the textile industries, worked diligently to undermine suffrage. The distillers feared that women would vote in Prohibition. The temperance movement had always been loud and clear about its agenda, after all. Textile manufacturers worried that women voters would support legislation that increased wages and reduce the work week for women and children workers. Anti-suffrage lobbies also worried that women were, in general, too pacific and would not support future wars. Even though the Wheeler group, the religious institutions, and the lobbyists had money and political power, they failed to stop the march of American women's progress. They did, however, manage to delay the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment until 1920.

Tarbell and Gilman each tried to sway the opinion of the group comprised of educated upper- and middle-class women who were ambivalent about their lives and about suffrage. By the turn of the twentieth century, many of these young women had grown up with such privileges as a college education that the first wave of feminism had wrought. Theodore Roosevelt had already argued that women who were college educated and who employed birth control to limit family size were committing "race suicide," and in January 1895, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell (whose rest cure influenced Gilman's story, "The Yellow Wall-Paper") told Radcliffe students that if women sought careers because of their education rather than choose what he saw as the finer and nobler domestic life, "then better close every college door in the land" (qtd. in Camhi 24). Yet young women did want to use their educations outside of the home and to advance themselves in their careers. These were the readers whose opinions Gilman and Tarbell sought to capture. One such individual was Inez Haynes Gillmore, a successful writer whose short stories often appeared in the pages of the *American Magazine*. She wrote of herself, "I hang in a void midway between two spheres—the man's sphere and the woman's sphere. A professional career . . . puts me beyond the reach of the average woman's duties and pleasures. The conventional limitations of the female put me beyond the reach of the average man's duties and pleasures" (qtd. in Lasch 58).

Tarbell, too, was just such a conflicted woman. She lived a quintessential "New Woman" lifestyle, unmarried, eager to support herself and pursue her own goals and preserve her own liberties. She owned property in her own

name. Yet in 1899, when she moved to New York City to take up the editorial position at *McClure's,* she was encouraged by the wealthy and activist Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer to join the New York Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage. Her membership and participation were always kept something of a secret. John Phillips, Tarbell's friend and co-editor and publisher of the *American Magazine,*[7] found Tarbell's almost militant anti-feminism difficult to understand or to reconcile with the choices she had made in the conduct of her own life. He asked her to write to him explaining the glaring discrepancy between her conduct and her comments. Tarbell replied that she had been raised by a feminist mother who entertained feminist speakers at home, but that during her college years she changed her own mind because she thought that there were bigger ideas afoot than those of women's causes and rights. During the 1880's, as a writer and editor she decided that woman's contribution to civilization should not be in the public sphere but in the private. Her first published monograph concerned the women of the French Revolution. Studying women's participation in the violence took from her, she wrote, "all enthusiasm I had ever felt for women in public life. . . . Radical and conservative, Royalist and democrat, aristocrat and proletariat, I had the same revulsion against them all" (qtd. in Camhi 176). Tarbell believed that women participants in the French Revolution demonstrated that rather than injecting a civilizing influence on events, the events uncivilized them instead. She wrote to Phillips that she believed that there were more women who did not want the vote than those who did. Throwing her lot in with the former, she wrote in her letter that it is a fallacy that "we can be saved morally, economically, or socially by laws and systems"; she felt that her misgivings about suffrage were "a kind of instinct—it is not logic or argument, I mistrust it—I do not want it" (qtd. in Camhi 178). Tarbell relies on "feelings" rather than intellect or logic to make her point. The essentialist position presented in her letter and in her subsequent "Uneasy Woman" articles are marked by this emotional rather than reasoned strategy.

Tarbell's earliest anti-feminist articles were a series on woman's role in the *American Magazine,* concluding in May 1910. Gilman responded to these articles in *The Forerunner* with "Suffrage":

> [A] true democracy requires the intelligent participation of all the people and . . . women are people. . . . I advocate woman suffrage on two grounds: first because a dependent and servile womanhood is an immovable obstacle to race development; second because the major defects of our civilization are clearly traceable to the degradation of the female and the unbalanced predominance of the male, which unnatural relation is responsible for the

> social evil, for the predatory and combative elements in our economic processes, and for that colossal mingling of folly, waste, and horror, that wholly masculine phenomenon—war. (24)

In *The Forerunner* for March 1911, Gilman became more specific and complained in her "Answers to the 'Anti's,'" "But the Anti's of painful prominence are anti-virtue. They are opposing a well-known good. They wish to prevent people from doing right" (74). She then enumerated six anti-suffrage arguments and refuted each one. But by 1912, Gilman saw Tarbell as an even more formidable opponent to her own fiercely held ideas, so that when "The Uneasy Woman" was serialized in the *American Magazine,* she meticulously refuted Tarbell's arguments in *The Forerunner.*

In the February 1912 *Forerunner,* Gilman respectfully takes Tarbell to task in "Miss Ida Tarbell's 'Uneasy Woman.'" Tarbell relies on broad generalizations: she argues, "Society, especially man-made society, resents a restless woman" (38). Gilman counters that the world is not necessarily arranged for the comfort of only one sex: "Since woman is the mother and maker of mankind, why is it not an imperative that life be arranged to suit her?"(38). When Gilman quotes Tarbell that homemaking is "Nature's plan for her [woman]" and the only thing that ails woman is "false mating," Gilman dismisses her argument summarily (38). But when she takes on Tarbell's assertion that outside of homemaking all other vocations belong to "the Business of Being a Man," Gilman reminds her readers that "books, trades and profession are not 'his.' They are not masculine distinctions. They have nothing whatever to do with sex. They are human and belong to women precisely as much as to men" (39). Gilman continues in this vein by again citing Tarbell's opinion that women can find no circumstances beyond the home where female "ripeness" and "wisdom" can be developed (39). Laughing in print, Gilman suggests that Tarbell listen to the "estimable ladies" on a resort piazza to see what "wisdom" and "ripeness" they "who have never had any other business except being women" have developed (39). Finally, Gilman quotes Tarbell's argument that "the suffragist adapts to her needs a form of feminine coquetry as old as the world. To defy and to denounce the male has always been one of woman's most successful provocative ways" (39). Gilman suggests that this is "the meanest rejoinder" in the whole essay and that suffrage is not, in fact, historically woman's way of catching or keeping a man. In closing, Gilman offers Tarbell a compliment of sorts when she says that "Ida Tarbell is respected and admired by thousands of readers; of those thousands there will be few who will not be ashamed by the weakness of this article" (39).

Studying *The Forerunner* for February 1912 as a periodical and its nature

as a discrete artifact demonstrates how Gilman took thematic control over the issue as a whole. The article preceding Gilman's response to Tarbell is titled "Women and Democracy." In this piece, Gilman states her own vision of the world and how it will be improved when women earn the vote. But she also strongly states that women must work harder to convince opponents that they are working still. She argues,

> The essential condition of democracy is an advanced state of social consciousness. . . . It has nothing whatever to do with the superiority of individuals.
>
> Here is where all the timid limitations to progress of democracy fall to ground, the "property qualification," the "education qualification," and the "sex qualification."
>
> The demand for these rests on the older idea of government as a matter of authority; of something done to us by someone else. That rests on the old basic family relation; where the older and wiser must of necessity preserve and manage the common interest of the unequal group. (35)

"Government in our present sense," she argues, "is not the exercise of authority; it is the performance of service" (35–36). The mass of nonvoting women "constitutes a huge inert class, distributed evenly throughout society, acting as a general check to the orderly development of government. The child who should be in training for his 'kingship' [Tarbell's term] . . . is reared in an atmosphere pre-democratic by ten thousand years; an atmosphere where his strongest modifying influence—his mother—knows nothing and cares nothing for the major government processes of society in her time and race; for the large economic and political processes of democracy" (36). Gilman fills out *The Forerunner*'s page where her article on Tarbell ends with a poem called "Cycles." Its third and final stanza reads:

> I am Human.
> Working so
> Building with immortal will,
> Rising through the ages slow
> On the generations grow—
> Upward still. (39)

Gilman did not dignify Tarbell's second article, "Making a Man of Herself," with more that a few lines of her February 1912 *Forerunner*'s "Comment and Review" page. Here she proclaims, as "A Case of Continued

Delusion," that this article "rests on two false premises: first, that human work is a male function, and second, that a woman that accomplishes anything in extra-domestic lines must thereby forfeit all hope of home and marriage" (84). Gilman editorialized, "To see anyone trying to sweep back the tide with a broom is either pathetic or ridiculous, and Miss Tarbell's work stands too high to be ridiculous. But for such a woman so conspicuously to exhibit an old, and common fallacy, in the face of present knowledge[,] is truly pitiful" (84).

The *American Magazine* for March is yet another example of the periodical as a thematically controlled singular entity. The monthly "Interesting People" column profiles Lady Gregory. Like all the women featured in these monthly pieces, Lady Gregory's worldly achievements are subsumed by her womanly virtue and modesty.[8] The Gregory piece is followed by an Edna Ferber story in which the traveling saleswoman Emma McChesney demands equal treatment in a full hotel saying, "I'm doing a man's work and earning a man's salary and demanding to be treated with as much consideration as you'd show a man" (555). A male competitor says he likes her but objects to the fact that she gets special treatment from buyers because she is a woman. The saleswoman wins the sale but is portrayed as decidedly too much the huckster by all the men around her. The implication here is that modest woman, like Lady Gregory, can succeed but must always be a lady first, lest she lose an essential element of her womanly virtue.

The reader is now prepared to accept more readily Tarbell's installment titled "The Business of Being a Woman." In it she tackles the notion that young girls get no good information about the biology of womanhood or motherhood. They receive information from other "uneasy women" who mistakenly impart that the choice of a life partner is made on the basis of a man's ability to make a woman happy. She lets this bad advice create in her mind a set of rules about men that she will impose on her mate. "Flexibility, adaptation, [and] fair-mindedness" should be the watchwords of marriage, she suggests (564). But most women miss out, never understanding that "marriage is made or unmade by small, not great things" (564). Tarbell suggests that marriage is an economic partnership but that women don't appreciate that, if a woman fails in her job as a wise consumer, she fails the man who is the producer. She further says that women's clubs are a scourge on the land because they distract women from seeing the world around them as it is. The local butcher is being squeezed out by a huge meat concern who offers cheaper beef but who, after destroying the local businessman, then sells the club woman inferior beef at a higher price because she was too busy studying Greek drama to pay attention to the world around her. Woman's job, Tarbell

asserts, is to "recognize that she is a guardian of quality, honesty, and humanity in industry" (565). The lack of honesty in all American enterprise is thus laid at the feet of the American homemaker. Further, Tarbell reprises Sarah Josepha Hale's mid-nineteenth-century cry for a resurgence of Republican Motherhood: Woman's great task is to turn out good men. "If our Uneasy Woman could grasp the full meaning of her place in this 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, would she not cease to apologize for herself—cease to look with envy on men's occupations? . . . Her great task is to prepare the citizen" (568). This job calls for nobility and energy but not necessarily, Tarbell asserts, the right to vote. The American woman must remember that her role is to raise good moral sons; otherwise the nation will fail. (Daughters do not merit a role in this discussion.)

In that same March 1912 issue of the *American Magazine* was an episode of H. G. Wells's serialized novel "Marriage." In this installment, a young couple who have met, fallen in love, and married in haste have become unhappy because he is thrifty and she is the conspicuous consumer. The episode of the Wells story underscores Tarbell's message about two of the primary sources of unhappiness in marriage. The first is making the wrong choice in mate, based on the idea that all that matters is that a man will make a woman happy. The second point is that a woman who is not a careful observer of the market around her is a poor consumer, no matter how much money she spends.[9] It would appear that Tarbell, as editor, previewed the Wells piece and tailored her own submission to make use of the fictional marriage as an example of her points.

In the April 1912 *Forerunner* Gilman responds in "Miss Tarbell's Third Paper" that the main problem with her "Business of Being a Woman" is that Tarbell conflates that business with the business of housekeeping: "A physiological and psychological process is by no means the same thing as an economic process—a trade" (92). Gilman also criticizes Tarbell's apparent support for a system in which raising sons for "functions beyond those of fatherhood" but not doing the same for daughters results in "the maintenance of one sex for the sole purpose of the bearing and rearing of the other" (92). Further, Gilman argues that motherhood is important, but that a young woman's choice of mate should be made solely on the basis of her partner's being "a clean and vigorous father for her children"(92). She argues that a woman's work as a man's partner should be paid work. Her example is that of a man and a woman as partners in a restaurant, where they share the work and the profits as economic partners. But a man who has a servant, no

matter how much that servant is loved, does not share economic profit with her. Motherhood is one thing, but a woman's work in the home is a job and should be compensated. Whereas Tarbell argues that raising good citizens must be a woman's primary job, Gilman counters that if we are to have good citizens from childhood on, we must begin with mothers who are good citizens. All corruption of democracy, all graft in the town government, and all the cheating in the commercial sector can be laid at the feet of emancipated women who do not look to their responsibilities, according to Ida Tarbell. Gilman insists that this argument is specious nonsense.

Tarbell seems to be actively attacking a main thesis of Gilman's earlier work—notably *Women and Economics* (1898), *Concerning Children* (1900), *The Home* (1903) and *Human Work* (1904)—in which Gilman had asserted, especially in *Women and Economics,* that women are still bound by a primitive "sexuo-economic relation" (79). She had written, "We are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food, the only animal species in which the sex-relation is also an economic relation" (5). Tarbell's "Business of Being a Woman," according to Gilman, exemplifies that same practice, held onto by primitive people the world over from time immemorial. For Gilman "the business of being a woman" is not synonymous with housekeeping (92). She cannot abide this essentialist notion and reminds her readers that "Woman is a female. Granted. Woman is nothing but a female. Denied" (95). She further argues that though Tarbell distinguishes between the quality of the lives of women in non-suffrage states and those in states where women could vote on state and local issues and candidates, these are false comparisons. Suffrage has little or nothing to do with the personal choices and issues that Tarbell raises. Gilman adds a poem to underscore her opinion of the Tarbell article. In the third and last stanza of "Thoughts and Facts," she concludes:

> Long the lifestream held its own,
> Hers alone.
> That first form, through ages dim,
> Slowly has developed him.
> Late he came, with little stir,
> As God's last best gift to her.
> What he thinks may guide his acts,
> But it does not alter facts. (95)

Thus Gilman refutes Tarbell, reminding us of woman's place in the world and also the sociological thesis she shared with Lester Ward, author of *Dynamic*

Sociology (1883), that woman was the primary figure in human evolution while man was secondary.[10]

In April, Tarbell offered her installment "The Homeless Daughter." She argues that young women should stay at home until marriage and that they will encounter grief if they do not. Girls only wish to leave home because the worth of homemaking has been devalued by militant feminism. Girls' freedoms can be dangerous, and those who seek personal advancement and pleasure are, to Tarbell, "homeless" daughters. Furthermore, women with grown children should stay at home and not seek political jobs or work outside the home, where their "business" is not "done," despite their children's absence (692). They should remain at home as a symbol of what is right about the home and a visible sign of the home's goodness, she asserts.

In her May 1912 refutation, "Miss Tarbell's 'The Homeless Daughter,'" Gilman acknowledges Tarbell's recognition that "changes . . . make the home no longer a place of compelling industry in a dozen lines at once, able to continually employ the energies of all its women"(120). Gilman also agrees that "parental authority used upon an adult daughter . . . [is] merely a lingering relic of a once useful force; and the daughter's need of some larger more far-reaching work" is understandable and laudable (120). While Gilman applauds Tarbell's desire that a "Young Woman. . . . understand the purposes, methods and needs of humanity in [her] time and place, and give to it [her] best service," Gilman responds that "the cumulative results in our general gain and happiness depend on the courage and honesty with which we all perform our social service" (120). As for keeping active older mothers at home as symbols of goodness, Gilman is completely dismissive: "That active, energetic woman of fifty, who has fulfilled her cycle of mother duties" needs to get out into the world. Gilman wonders how our young women are to be saved by "an unoccupied mother at home, twiddling her thumbs in the well-dusted parlor; and yet utterly uninfluenced by that same parent if she spent part of her time on the school board or inspecting factories; or if, without sacrificing an hour to such duties, she did read the newspaper—that school of political wisdom! and vote once a year?" (121).

This response is preceded by Gilman's not terribly memorable story, "A Strange Influence," about an eighteen-month-old baby who becomes an unwitting ventriloquist's doll for a little while and tells off her lazy mother who can keep neither her house nor her servants. The child's live-in grandmother could and would do a much better job of housekeeping and childcare if only the young mother would allow her to do it. So shocked are the baby's parents that the mother accedes immediately to the child's demands. Grandmother takes over and the house is cleaner, safer, and happier for all. There is

a place for the woman after fifty, says Gilman, and in this case the job is a job she knows best: housekeeping. Although not as good a story nor as strong an argument as "Making a Change" (1911) or "Mrs. Elder's Idea" (1912), "A Strange Influence" makes Gilman's case that young women should be out working in the world and that older women still have a meaningful role to play besides acting as the decorative symbol of goodness at home, as Tarbell would have it. Gilman's placement of this story serves as one other strand of her argument on this point.

Gilman does not respond to Tarbell's final entry of June 1912, "The Woman and Democracy," in which Tarbell suggests that immigrant servant girls must be trained in moral American households (another patriotic reason, she claims, for women to stay at home) about the honor of labor and democratic principles. We think at our peril, Tarbell suggests, that "because the immigrant girl does not know our ways she knows nothing" (219). We must teach her to "preserve and develop that which she has learned at home" because she will ultimately be starting her own American household and must also raise thoughtful, voting, American sons (219). Perhaps Gilman chose not to take Tarbell on because she had already refuted the notion that people only seemed interested in raising voting sons in her earlier responses.

We might also recall that, through this whole dialogue, Gilman was serializing a revised *Human Work* (1904) as "Our Brains and What Ails Them" in the 1912 *Forerunner.* She recasts her concern with the ways that all economic relations shape our lives as human beings in the collective enterprise of life, the central thesis of *Human Work*. Instead, she examines how our brains are affected by various social practices and institutions, including tradition and authority, literature and journalism, religion and science, education and gender. In chapter 10, "What We do to the Child Mind," Gilman claims that "no conditions are discovered more vitally important, more universal and continuous, than the educational conditions surrounding the first years of practically the whole human race" (279). By implication, as the locus of early childhood experience, she writes of the home not so much as she previously had, as a place of subordination of women, but rather as the place from which the best human development may grow. In the importance of the home, she and Tarbell agree. But their answers to where that importance lies and who should be participating in its implementation indicate their philosophical difference. For Gilman, the home launches the young into world service. It is also the place where young men and women are to be brought up as good citizens and future voters. For Tarbell, the home raises future male voters and nurtures and protects young women who must learn to replicate its traditions. That young women should not be brought up as equally active

participants in the work of the world, Gilman could simply not abide. Her response to Tarbell's "Uneasy Woman" series demonstrates that, for Gilman, woman's only significant uneasiness is the infantilizing, demoralizing, and demeaning notion that women should remain at home with no ambition other than replicating the boredom and disenfranchisement of their mothers. The manner in which Tarbell conducted her own life would seem to suggest a tacit agreement with Gilman's words rather than her own.[11]

NOTES

1. Gary Scharnhorst explains that Gilman revised *Human Work* as "Our Brains and What Ails Them" (1912), "Humanness" (1913), and "Social Ethics" (1914) (all three are *Forerunner* serializations), then later as the unpublished "A Study in Ethics." Gilman was never fully satisfied with these efforts (60).

2. Larry Ceplair also notes additional Gilman responses to the Tarbell articles (192, 324nn18–19).

3. See Albert Jay Nock, "A New Science and Its Findings," *American Magazine* 73.5 (Mar. 1912): 577–83.

4. See Bettina Aptheker, *Lynching and Rape: An Exchange of Views* (New York: American Institute for Marxist Studies, 1977).

5. See Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), and Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Noonday/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998) for a history of Republican Motherhood and True Womanhood and their influence on American life in the nineteenth century.

6. For further discussion of class issues and their role in anti-suffrage arguments, see Susan E. Marshall, "In Defense of Separate Spheres: Class and Status Politics in the Anti-Suffrage Movement," *Social Forces* 65.2 (1986): 327–51.

7. Coincidentally, Phillips also was the publisher of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Human Work* (1904)—the very same book that Gilman chose to serialize as the re-named "Our Brains and What Ails Them" in the 1912 *Forerunner,* the same volume in which Gilman responds to Tarbell's "Uneasy Woman" series.

8. See Dana Gatlin, "Lady Gregory," *American Magazine* 73.5 (Mar. 1912): 550–53. Lady Gregory was a major figure in the Irish Literary Renaissance, founder of the famed Abbey Theatre, and mentor to its writers, including W. B. Yeats and John Millington Synge.

9. See H. G. Wells, "Marriage," *American Magazine* 73.5 (Mar. 1912): 604–16.

10. Although she often affects an amused tone when taking Tarbell to task, Gilman was considerably distressed by Tarbell's and the "Antis'" power. She and several suffrage advocates (among them Tarbell and Gilman's mutual friend, Jane Addams) called for a mass meeting at the Metropolitan Temple in New York City to be held 15 April 1912.

Sadly, the *Titanic* sank on that date. The tragedy overwhelmed the media for several days thereafter, and there is no mention of the meeting in the New York newspapers.

11. With thanks to Deborah Cane for her gracious and most helpful comments and edits on the first draft of this essay.

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