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The Business of Being a Woman

Ida M. Tarbell (1857 - 1944)

Read by: Multiple readers Language: English
 Length: 3 hours and 45 minutes Style: Collaborative
 Genre: Non-Fiction, Essays, Women's Studies

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From the author's introduction...

“The object of this little volume is to call attention to a certain distrust, which the author feels in the modern woman, of the significance and dignity of the work laid upon her by Nature and by society. Its ideas are the result of a long, if somewhat desultory, observation of the professional, political, and domestic activities of women in this country and in France. These observations have led to certain definite opinions as to those phases of the woman question most in need of emphasis to-day.

A great problem of human life is to preserve faith in and zest for everyday activities. The universal easily becomes the vulgar and the

burdensome. The highest civilization is that in which the largest number sense, and are so placed as to realize, the dignity and the beauty of the common experiences and obligations. “

Ida M. Tarbell (November 5, 1857 – January 6, 1944) was an American author who became known for helping pioneer the “muckracking” investigative style of journalism that exposed social injustice, political corruption and the misdeeds of corporations. She was born in a log cabin in Erie County, Pennsylvania. Her father built wooden storage tanks for the emerging oil industry and in 1860 moved the family to Titusville, Pennsylvania, where he produced and refined oil. Ida graduated at the top of her high school class and graduated from Allegheny College in 1880, the only woman in her class. After finding teaching wearisome she accepted a position at The Chautauquan, a publication for home study courses, becoming editor in 1886. She moved to Paris for postgraduate study and wrote a biography of Madame Roland, the leader of an influential salon during the French Revolution. While there she wrote numerous articles for magazines and came to the attention of Samuel McClure, who hired her as editor for McClure’s Magazine. There she wrote a popular series on Napoleon Bonaparte and established a national reputation with a 20-part series on Abraham Lincoln. In 1900 she began a thorough investigation of Standard Oil, beginning with interviews of Henry H. Rogers, a key executive in the Standard Oil organization, and poring through hundreds of thousands of pages of public documents scattered across the country. In doing so, she set the standard for investigative reporting. The resulting History of the Standard Oil Company was serialized in 19 installments in McClure’s and then published in book form in 1904. She followed it with a profile of John D. Rockefeller, the first CEO profile ever published. Tarbell was an ardent suffragist who never married. She became an advocate for of home and family life in her later years until her death at age 86.