Columbia University Press

Chapter Title: DOROTHY WHITNEY AND WILLARD STRAIGHT

Book Title: The Refuge of Affections
Book Subtitle: Family and American Reform Politics, 1900--1920
Book Author(s): Eric Rauchway
Published by: Columbia University Press. (2001)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/rauc12146.6

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One

DOROTHY WHITNEY AND WILLARD STRAIGHT

You marry to get married . . . not because you want to change the world.
—Marianne Gingrich[1]

Even before it began publishing in 1914, the *New Republic* had become the focus of Progressive attention. The infant journal out of New York City seemed to speak for a generation of reformers ambitious to transform American society. Whatever its intellectual merits, it owed its prominence to the joint intentions and extensive connections of its married publishers, Dorothy Whitney and Willard Straight, who created it to fulfill the shared elements of their reform agendas and thus to give their marriage a public presence. These shared elements comprised a set of convictions about their duty to the benighted, who were in this case a public that required education on political matters so that it could manage its own affairs and become truly self-governing. While the Straights were planning the venture, they gave it the politically purposeful subtitle *A Journal of Liberal Democracy* (which later became the blander *Journal of Opinion*). The original subtitle revealed their intentions: within the framework of liberalism, the only legitimate role for the powerful was the adoption of the powerless as their temporary charges, to encourage their independence. Elites had to foster democratic self-government, though

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it meant ultimately undermining their own privileged standing. In this respect they behaved like proper liberal parents, the legitimacy of whose authority rested on their willingness to see to its eventual dissolution. The Straights shaped the *New Republic* as an institution and as the source of an ongoing critical social commentary to serve these purposes. Their confidence in this mission attracted and inspired innumerable Progressives precisely because the ideas they expressed echoed and amplified the experiences of their generation.

Like many of their contemporaries, both Dorothy Whitney and Willard Straight had, when younger, tried to change the world they knew, and they both succeeded within limits. Both established reform projects that addressed the relations between powerful and powerless classes of people and aimed at the ultimate independence of dependent classes. Neither found the limits on their activities satisfying and so both sought new ways of achieving the changes they desired. They found that marriage to each other afforded them, if only for a time, the chance to forge a partnership dedicated to the transformation of social relations.[2]

THE BENEVOLENT METROPOLIS

Dorothy Whitney was born in 1887 to a pair of singularly agile social climbers. William Collins Whitney married one fortune (in the person of Flora Payne) and then promptly made another of his own. He did both easily, and then unlike so many of his peers he turned his attention away from money to things he enjoyed: remaking the Metropolitan Opera House into a showplace for Manhattan society, remaking muddy Saratoga into a mecca for the horsey set, and making and remaking Grover Cleveland into the President of the United States. Throughout it all, Flora served as his partner by playing hostess to society, for that was how social climbers cemented their gains: through invitations made and accepted. Their marriage worked publicly, though privately it was (in his words) a "failure" that they kept up "for the sake of the children and society."[3]

Their concern for their children and their concern for society coincided, because for the upwardly mobile the plateau never comes unless the next generation can feel at home on the family's new height. Thus their attention to proper schools for boys; proper finishings, debuts, and betrothals for girls. In light of this pattern, which seems bound to create a conservative generation of offspring, biographers of Dorothy Whitney

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have puzzled over why she should have become so singularly socially active. Women of her time and place were supposed to join the Junior League and do good works to occupy their time before and after marriage. They were not supposed to allow the pursuit of good works to take the place of marriage. But Dorothy put her energy wholly into her good works for a time: she put off marriage and devoted herself instead to what she called her "social"—as opposed to her society—"obligations."[4]

As an early and constant member of the Junior League, Whitney belonged to a group of women who identified themselves chiefly as debutantes and who knew that so far as their families were concerned, they existed principally to ornament their fathers' and husbands' checkbooks. As one of her peers wrote anonymously in the *Junior League Bulletin*, the Leaguers' summer stream of consciousness probably sounded something like this:

> Three letters. Fine. Let's see—from Mary—she's going to Canada to go into camp is she? Oh! She says Laura's gone to California—I hate the train so. Poor thing I'm sorry for her—she'll miss the tournament. Hm—Oh! Well, Mary never did write anything interesting. Who's this? Jack Eustis, engaged, and to that little Irwin girl! She hates to dance and never goes out. Oh! Well, that's one more gone. Kitty does use the worst paper, I hate these passionate purple linings. Hm—hym—hm I don't believe it.[5]

They could only defend themselves against the triviality of these concerns with a plaintive credo: "That all the money and time which has been spent on us is not a lost investment to the world, that we are worth something in life . . . we want to be of some real use, no matter how small."[6] To make themselves really useful, they organized sewing circles and theatrical benefits and undertook home visits to the poor. The Junior League had originally been called the Junior League for Neighborhood Work, and the Leaguers voted themselves the principal duty of acting as teachers to the mothers among their poorer neighbors, not only through lectures and other group projects but through home visits. The Leaguer also

> visits for the teacher who through lack of time is unable to do this for herself the home of any child who has either been absent for any length of time or who in the schoolroom has seemed to be either mentally or physically below the standard, and discovers

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> whether or not the fault is due to home influence, ill-treatment, or perhaps lack of sufficient nourishment.[7]

To be sure, these visits might well, to their half-willing, harassed immigrant hosts, have felt more like home invasions, as a debutante Leaguer swept through the family tenement of a troubled child, censoriously seeking critical lacks in cleanliness, nourishment, or cultural environment. The Leaguers' adoption of this teacherly, parental role reflected their unflattering opinion of the immigrant poor—what one historian calls the inevitable "unexamined assumptions" of the reformer.[8] But this condescension was essential to the intellectual architecture of a reformer's imagination—if the poor of other cultures were not somehow deficient, then nothing could justify the intervention of an untrained debutante whose advantages came to her by virtue of her birth and upbringing, rather than by hard experience.

The most important way in which Dorothy Whitney differed from her fellow Leaguers was in her willingness to devote herself fully to a career of reform and not to worry about suitors. An advantage of misfortune permitted her this freedom: her mother, then her stepmother, and finally her father died while she was still a minor, leaving her in 1904, at the age of seventeen, legally in the loose care of her brother Harry and his wife Gertrude, which for all practical purposes meant she was left to herself: Harry and Gertrude had their own problems. William Whitney's will gave Dorothy an annual income of $50,000 a year (she would take full control of her capital on her majority at twenty-one) and, at least as important, he saw that she had a guardian, Beatrice Bend, whom the estate paid an additional $10,000 a year. When Dorothy looked back on her life from the vantage point of her old age, she wrote, "One event and one personal relationship were the determining factors of that period, and to a great extent, influenced the rest of my life." The death of her father gave her money, and also independence from parental concerns as to whom she might marry. The friendship of Bend gave her guidance "along a somewhat unorthodox road," as she wrote. She was dramatically, and awfully, free to do almost anything she liked.[9]

Bend was the daughter of a financier who improvidently died during a financial downturn. She helped Whitney to get a more serious education than she otherwise might, moving her from a socially prominent to a more intellectually rigorous school, and she accompanied her as she toured Europe, acquiring the American version of high culture (that is to say,

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European culture). She helped Whitney to test herself safely against received opinion. Dealing intellectually with works of art, Whitney worried alternately that she was "unoriginal in her tastes" for conforming too much to canonical judgment and then "felt ashamed to admit that I don't care for Raphael's 'Transfiguration,' " and other presumably important pictures, artificial and natural alike: "I don't understand why it is called the blue Danube for it is really a dirty greenish color. Perhaps I haven't got an artistic eye!" As she saw more and thought more she grew surer in her judgment, and she dismissed masterpieces she did not like as "stupid."[10] Throughout her education, her relationship with Bend was the foremost fact of both their lives. She called Bend "Sister" and Bend called Whitney "Angel." When they parted, however briefly, Whitney missed her greatly: "I have never felt so lonely in all my life. What shall I do without her!" When they fought (over issues Whitney did not record), it depressed her. Bend was Whitney's closest early influence; she wanted to see her young charge do something useful with her moneyed life—and she had, in her own later words, "a prejudice against matrimony."[11]

Thus Dorothy Whitney spent her youth in a world of women that became for a while her whole world. Though she made her debut and did not lack for the standard range of importunate swains, she gave little serious thought to marriage. Instead, she spent her time taking the Junior League more seriously than the run of its members did. She became its president at the age of eighteen. On attaining her majority at twenty-one, she moved into a Manhattan apartment with Ruth Morgan, a like-minded woman of similar background. Both of them took classes at Columbia, seeking "the theory underlying social efforts." The problems of the poor, and the circle of women, comprised Whitney's world, and she delighted in it: "I'm living with Ruth!" she wrote in her diary, and recorded how, on snowy days, they stayed in bed to read together Maud Booth's *After Prison—What?* on the rehabilitation of criminals.[12]

As president of the Junior League and a reader of Thorstein Veblen and John Dewey (as well as Maud Booth), and as a student, too, of Jane Addams, Dorothy Whitney sought to turn the League toward closer engagement with urban problems—toward, as she later wrote, "social work of a more serious nature." Philanthropy supplied temporary, and needed, balms for social hurts, but Whitney wanted to change the terms of "neighborhood work" by changing the neighborhood. After consulting with the prominent settlement-house leaders Addams and Lillian Wald, she set the League a task even more ambitious than the settlement

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houses: to create for working women a clean, well-appointed apartment house they could eventually run themselves.

Whitney made the Junior League House her major project between 1908 and 1911. She dealt with the practical matters of funding, architecture, facilities, location, and staff. But "the fundamental idea" (as she wrote a friend) remained the same, irrespective of the details: "to build a tenement for working girls" and to be sure that whatever its structure or location it be made ultimately "to pay" for itself.[13] It turned out much as she hoped, opening its doors on 20 May 1911, in a handsome building in East Seventy-eighth Street, close by the East River. With a fund of $270,000, the Leaguers put up an impressive residential club, with a library, a series of reception rooms, a roof garden, tennis and basketball courts, and a room full of typewriters for the working women's common use. More than three hundred women could live in its rooms, whose windows looked either out of the building or over a well-ventilated courtyard. Its dining room could seat them all, plus the house superintendent (a position Whitney thought particularly important: she called the supervisor "the matron," and she herself interviewed the candidates for the job.)[14] The club succeeded as an independently funded operation: by 1922, the Junior League House was self-supporting, and in it, as the *Daily News* would self-righteously complain, "working girls now live like the 400 [Manhattan's supposedly most important four hundred citizens]. . . . The whole thing is virtually a sorority house built for self-supporting girls."[15]

Thus Dorothy Whitney proved to herself and her peers that the debutantes of the Junior League could address social concerns in concrete and philosophically significant terms. Women who worked and lived in the Junior League House would not require the cultural or charitable intervention of settlement-house workers or Leaguers. They enjoyed their own facilities for entertainment and exercise and lived in a house they could pay for themselves. They attained this independence after a period of minimal, matronly supervision. Whitney would repeat this pattern in her later ventures, encouraging the objects of her reform to take control of their own lives within cultural parameters she would set; she, and her reform-minded allies, determined what was worthwhile, and encouraged—and enabled—their charges to live up to that mark.

Through this phase of her career, Dorothy Whitney had much in common with many other women reform leaders. The first decades of the twentieth century were a grand time for women's organizations of all sorts, which together comprised the crest of a great wave of women's

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political activity that had been gathering force since the middle of the preceding century and would soon—though nobody yet knew it—break, leading to a calm, if not to a decided ebb. Many of these organizations acted similarly to Whitney's Junior League in that they pressed for social change indirectly rather than confronting controversial issues head-on. For example, though Whitney herself favored women's suffrage and joined parades and rallies and spoke publicly for it, she did not push the issue within the League, which divided into "suffs" and "antis" and could not have arrived at a common position on the question. Instead she worked within the League's existing framework of commitments, modifying its determination "to be of some real use" along lines she preferred. Whitney's League was also typical in establishing a women's separate world, ideally distinct from the political and financial world of men, in which women in fact held meetings, elected representatives, and raised, budgeted, and disbursed money. And the Junior League House, in its hands-on, local specificity, typified women's reform activities as well.[16]

But Whitney also innovated on the basic model of feminine benevolence, most importantly in her emphasis on the eventual independence of the objects of her reform, and in the planned gradualism of this approach to independence. Her study of Dewey gave her an interest in the meliorative effects of education, and her awareness of her own advantages gave her a yardstick by which to measure social and intellectual freedom. As she wrote, "my independent position enabled me to assume a position of leadership amongst my own contemporaries."[17] Even compared with her privileged peers, she was distinctly free, for she did not feel herself forced to make a correct marriage. She believed that all people (or at least, at first, all Americans) should enjoy similar freedoms, and she established the Junior League House with a conspicuous emphasis on its eventual independence.

Even as she succeeded within this world, she began to look beyond it. Junior Leaguers took their intellectual development seriously, though they took it occasionally, and through guest speakers they learned about issues of the day. Professionals addressed the Junior League on public policy; for example, Franklin Giddings spoke on economics and William McAdoo on the city police force. As Whitney attended these activities, she felt herself becoming, to use the word she began using in her diary, "interested." Where churches, harbors, paintings, and the weather were "lovely" or "beautiful" (or, otherwise, "stupid" or "horrid"), only political topics were "interesting": "Dr. Maxwell spoke most interestingly on

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the Board of Education"; trips to Ellis Island with Bend were "very interesting!"; William Howard Taft's speech on the court system was "most interesting"; lunch with Lillian Wald at Henry Street was an "interesting time"; and Dr. Darlington's speech on the board of health was "most interesting of all."[18] This pattern suggests that political matters interested her as other things did not. And within her current purview, she could not wield enough political influence to satisfy herself. As she noted when she attended a conference on the New York City budget, she was the "only woman, except Dr. Robbins."[19] Women—especially women without professional degrees—did not have much of a say in public meetings on the budget and other similarly interesting subjects.

Whitney had led the Junior League to closer engagement with the conditions of the working poor. Within the limits of women's voluntary work, she found she could create, on a small scale, the circumstances in which representatives of a struggling class could learn to sustain themselves—under, of course, a measure of matronly and Junior League supervision. Ultimately the House tenants would run their own affairs while enjoying excellent material and cultural conditions. But she wanted to do more—to reach larger groups and make her voice heard, or if she could not properly accomplish that then to make her influence felt.

In 1911, as she wrapped up her work on the Junior League House and thus brought to a conclusion the first phase of her reform career, she began to work on two projects that would take her further. One was an alliance with former President Theodore Roosevelt that would take her into the heart of Progressive reform movements.[20] The other was her marriage, which she meant to do the same.

THE LIBERAL EMPIRE

Dorothy Whitney met Willard Straight over lunch at E. H. Harriman's house in 1906. Even though at the time Straight was between jobs, he sufficiently impressed her that in her diary she mentioned him by nickname: "Saw 'The Galloper' (Mr. Straight)."[21] Harriman was expanding his railroads through Asia and he wanted Straight's assistance. President Roosevelt would shortly make Straight the U.S. vice-consul in Manchuria, a desirable market for American goods and a key area for railroad construction. He rose to this eminence principally on the strength of his per-

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sonality, which (as Dorothy Whitney discovered) could leave a forcible impression in a short period of time.

Whatever political connections he had, he made for himself, for he had been born with none. He came from Oswego (way out west in New York State) and attended Cornell (a state university). His parents, who taught school, paid close attention to the Lockean theories of child rearing, by which precepts they brought him up from his birth in 1880. They taught him to think independently and establish good social relations with his toddler peers. He took to the instruction, asking them, "What John Locke say about Baby—so and so?" to get approval for an intended course of action.[22]

Straight lost both parents to tuberculosis, and thus, like Whitney, he depended on surrogates. For him there were two: his adoptive mother, Dr. Elvire Ranier (who took care of him while her housemate Laura Newkirk brought up his sister Hazel), and his mentor at Cornell, Professor Henry Morse Stephens, whom he called Foster Father.[23] Ranier encouraged him in his native artistic ability and he became a skilled portraitist and landscape painter, working chiefly with watercolors and pencil. Stephens helped him develop a guiding vision.

When asked about his vision, Straight always used the same language: "I am a borne [*sic*] imperialist," he would say; sometimes it would be a "rank Imperialist," or an "Imperialist confirmed and deep-dyed."[24] But by imperialism he meant something distinctive. His mentor Stephens promoted an ideal of the British Empire as a confederation, leading to the independence of its component states. He argued that the poetry of Rudyard Kipling gave voice to this ideal, though an ethic of "responsibility" accommodating both a sense of allegiance among states and also "the growth of national spirit in the protectorates."[25] Straight took these lessons to heart, modifying them in light of his own subsequent experience.

After his graduation in 1901, he took ship for China to serve in the Imperial Maritime Customs Service under Sir Robert Hart, whom he meant to imitate at Stephens's behest.[26] Hart was a model imperialist for Straight: though a British knight, he was legally an agent of the Chinese government, and insisted that he act accordingly even if it endangered British interests. His duty was, he believed, to the independent interests of Chinese institutions.[27] To Straight, Hart represented the idea of responsible imperialism, focusing on the mission and the result without representing any particular empire. But even though in Hart's customs

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service Straight learned Chinese and also the ins and outs of international trade, he felt himself constrained from real "character-making" in diplomatic circles.[28] He left the customs service to work as a journalist during the Russo-Japanese War, then joined the U.S. State Department at its mission in Seoul. He struggled to make clear his own ideas about a U.S. empire: it would have to be "a conquest of a different sort but it's the same old game of stretching out, mastering, not so much that nowadays, but leading, older civilizations. It is more peaceful and therefore less rude and more complex, it seems, but fine. I love it."[29]

He defined this ideal in contrast to the power politics he unhappily discovered were still always the business of empires. The principal example for him was Japan's military absorption of its Korean protectorate, while Theodore Roosevelt's U.S. administration stood quietly by. "Japan has appealed to the great interests of human progress, has boasted of her enlightenment, and the world has swallowed it all," he wrote, but "under the guise of waging a war for the preservation of her national existence, she has carried on a war of aggression." The solution, he believed, was for him to "unbluff the world," simply to reveal the facts.[30]

The most important element of Straight's ideal American imperialism was the emphasis on independence for China, which was now threatened principally by the old-style empires of Russia and Japan. Americans, Straight believed, had to make loans, conduct trade, and finance the construction of Chinese-owned railroads to help the Chinese recover control over their own territory and build up their strength against the incursion of their neighbors. This ideal derived from three sources: Straight's liberal prejudices, his adaptation of Stephens's imperialism, and the empathy for his subject that underlay his artistic talent. As one historian writes, "Unlike many Westerners who simply drew 'Europeans with oblique lines,' . . . Willard drew the Chinese with sympathy and understanding." In his youth he had toyed with the question of identity, posing "as a tramp," and in doing so he was disappointed that "people should not see under my disguise and welcome me as a friend and a brother." He continued to view the world in such terms, assuming the existence of common humanity in his fellows, and he described the process of Chinese independence in terms that deliberately employed comparisons to the story of U.S. independence: "Only when Alexander Hamilton had reorganized the finances of the country . . . were the United States able to borrow from foreign bankers on satisfactory terms." The imperial powers were supposed to assist China similarly to gain control of its affairs.

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It would be in the interests of colonizers and colonized alike for China to stand on its own.[31]

There were, therefore, some similarities, but also, more importantly, significant differences between Straight's prescription for an ideal American empire and the narratives of masculine imperialism that one historian describes as "hegemonic" during this period.[32] Straight did emphasize an element of manly responsibility as a core tenet of his imperialism. But where the supposedly hegemonic discourse of masculinity emphasized the necessary barbarism of international competition, and the ruthlessness of the struggle, Straight's manliness was decidedly not of the primitive variety. He accepted tobacco as a vice, but beyond that would not countenance the liberties that generally accompanied life on the imperial frontier. When he heard "talk of the profession of Jezebel," he reported, "My heart shrivelled within me." Straight's idea of imperial competition had more to do with bat and ball than with tooth and claw.[33]

Indeed, Straight often took pains to set himself apart from whatever tendencies toward primitive masculinity might have characterized his peers. His classmates sensed this resistance in him and nicknamed him Izzy—as in the question, "Is-he-Straight?"—to which the answer was a rather grim Yes. Straight did not believe in sin or excess, especially sexual: he later told his son, "Save yourself . . . that you may go clean and unashamed to her who will be your wife." In this respect, as in others, the ideal of manhood to which he hewed was the Victorian one of civilized restraint rather than the new masculinity of primitive indulgence, in which he had little interest and for whose devotees he had no use. He was relieved to avoid them when at school and wanted no business with them afterward. When he wrote Stephens that as consul he would need a deputy, he said, "I want an active intelligent serious-minded fellow," not one who talked only of "wine, women, and Horse-flesh," but he despaired of finding one among college men: "There were few in my time who would have filled the bill."[34]

For Straight, as for other devotees of Morse Stephens, the principal parallel between right-thinking manliness and imperial behavior was the recognition of responsibility, and the corresponding avoidance of weakness and corruption. These were all keywords for Stephens's men. When Alfred Sze, a Chinese-born Cornell contemporary of Straight's, asked Stephens how his home country might gain its independence, Stephens recommended that China attack France in Indo-China, where they were "weak" and "especially corrupt"; for his own part, Sze wrote that "China

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is so weak and corrupt, I have grave fears for her future."[35] In the lexicon of Stephens's empire, weakness and corruption went hand-in-hand with the avoidance of responsibility. Instead of indulging themselves in "days of languor," worshipping the "gospel of the aesthetic," men of empire had to evince "a spirit of work."[36] Abjuring the languorous and the aesthetic did not mean giving up one's talent for painting (Stephens's favorite Kipling hero was the artist of *The Light that Failed*) but it did mean making artistry part of one's work in the world, rather than an end in itself. Straight followed these prescriptions right along. For him, the "rotten corruption" of common imperial agents and remittance men corresponded to all the varieties of self-indulgence common to men in power.[37] He determined himself instead to stick to an ideal of responsible behavior, denying his worse impulses, making his artistry do the work of empire, and keeping to a narrow path, "feeling like a clipping from Kipling . . . part of a great machine, of a service."[38]

This emphasis on the responsibility of men corresponded to the purpose of Straight's empire. He countenanced the practice of one nation leading another because it meant improving the chances of the other to gain its independence. At least one historian believes that the point of combining manliness and dollar diplomacy was to prop up the dollar diplomat's sense of purpose—that the point of the relation of powerful to powerless was the relationship itself, which was therefore "perpetual."[39] Powerful masculinity defined itself through continuing domination. Though there can be no doubt that Straight believed dollar diplomacy would benefit Americans, he was also as sure that it would benefit Americans even more if the Chinese grew richer and independent. For Straight, the only justification for the imperial relationship was its tendency toward its own dissolution. Indeed, he would ultimately part company with other dollar diplomats because (he was chagrined to find) they did not "care a cuss about Chinese finance" per se but were interested only in their own balance sheets.[40]

After Straight's conversations with Harriman, he returned to China as the U.S. vice-consul in Manchuria, where he set about implementing his ambition to unbluff the world. He had seen Japan take Korea, and now he watched the Russians and Japanese and British and Germans try to carve up pieces of Manchuria and China. Imperial nations professing good intentions instead indulged rapacious instincts. They were, in the language of Straight's world, corrupt, and their predatory hypocrisy needed exposure. So, on the assumption that if people knew what he

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knew then they would think as he did, he set out to disabuse them of their illusions. He established a network of resources and, in collaboration with elements within the Chinese government, began publishing information. As his deputy wrote, they put together "statements of fact, backed up by chapter and verse references and reinforced by exact figures and dates. Personalities . . . were scrupulously avoided, and we discarded everything which might appear to be merely sensational." Nothing more would be necessary if (like Straight) one believed he were spreading only the truth to ordinary honest readers.[41]

Despite his scrupulousness, his enthusiasm undid him, for in his idealism he was at odds not only with the Europeans and Japanese but with his own government. Although Theodore Roosevelt sometimes sounded as fantastically idealistic as Straight, he had a strong grounding in realpolitik and believed that Americans' interests lay in accommodating Japan's desires.[42] If the United States wanted to trade in Manchuria, it had at least (Roosevelt figured) to acknowledge that Japan wanted not only to trade there but to run political affairs. Twice Straight banged up against the U.S. administration's sense of prudence. In the first instance, he challenged the Japanese in Manchuria over the safe passage of the mails. Japanese soldiers carrying mail got into a tiff with the Chinese guard at Straight's consulate, ultimately carrying the fight into the grounds and thus onto U.S. territory. Straight drew a pistol, rounded up the insurgents, and took them to confront the Japanese consul over the small invasion. Straight's pistol was broken, not to mention unloaded—but when the story of his bravado got out (ironically, through the publicity machine he had built) it made him look a little like a cowboy and also, as he put it, "a cad." Consuls waving weapons and collaring Japanese nationals were a sufficiently peculiar species even when their own press agencies did not seek to glorify them. Shortly afterward, at the urging of Harriman, the State Department pulled him out of Manchuria and asked him to negotiate a plan for the funding of a Chinese railroad with American assistance. This plan in its turn met defeat owing to the Roosevelt administration's rapprochement with Japan as reached in the Root-Takahira agreement. Though the agreement did little more than affirm the status quo, it suggested that the Americans were not about to do anything—such as assist in the funding of a Chinese-owned railroad—that would irritate the Japanese by undermining their sense of primacy in such affairs. The U.S. administration had again left Straight high and dry.[43]

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In both cases, the government under Roosevelt took the better part of diplomacy and deferred Straight's grand plans for assisting Chinese independence in favor of a closer alliance with Japan. Even so, Straight did not, and never would, give up on his belief that the just end of imperialism was the independence of colonized peoples. After 1909, Straight would return to China and pursue this ideal through an affiliation with the House of Morgan, the driving force among a consortium of banks seeking to make loans to China. If Roosevelt was too hardheaded for Straight's idealism, Morgan's head was concretized. But Straight would not realize it until he had to live among his employers in Wall Street. While he lived and worked in Asia, he could feel himself on the frontier of his imaginary empire, and it was in this ambitious frame of mind that he began to court Dorothy Whitney after their reacquaintance in 1909.

To expect of Roosevelt, Harriman, and (later in Straight's career) J. P. Morgan something more than an appreciation for the bottom line implied a certain naïveté. So did the belief that the Chinese were following a national story of independence that paralleled the American revolution. But however naive, they were Straight's beliefs, and they helped him impress Dorothy Whitney, who was looking for a visionary of sorts.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME STORY

During one of her visits to Europe, Dorothy Whitney wrote herself a letter. She was trying to figure out whether she wanted to marry, and what she wanted out of it if she did. "If I demand so much in a man in the way of mental capacity and desire for work and accomplishment of what is worthwhile—doubtless that man will be far beyond me in every way, and after a few years I may drop out of his life having ceased to be of any help, and then each of us will go our own way," she worried. Still, she was quite sure she wanted to ally herself with "a man with a good mind and a feeling of living and being 'up and doing' "—but then, if he had so much character of his own, she wondered if he might not need her enough—and surely her husband should need her. In any case "I don't think I could fall in love with a man who had no ambition or no aim in life—because I feel a great longing to become a part of his life and help him when possible to do his work—and then besides if he lacked all ambition I couldn't admire him." Taking all qualifications and desires into consideration, there was, she wrote, one person who seemed to fit the

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bill: "I have only seen one man that came near to what I long for—only one man that I would really like to marry—at least I think I would! Sometimes I feel 'oh, no'—not even you—but altogether he fills up most of the holes and I know he is much too good for me." And there she stopped writing. Though the dating of the note is uncertain, it appears to have been written after she met Straight, so he could well have been the one man. Certainly nobody projected "a feeling of living and being 'up and doing' " so well as a man whom she could call "The Galloper."[44]

After they met again at a dinner, he wrote her to say he wanted to see her again and was "really quite serious."[45] They began a correspondence that became a courtship. He told her about his adventures (as he saw them) and implored her to come visit China: "We are all awaiting you with the red carpets and the brass bands straining at the leash."[46] So she went to see this man in a world for which metaphors failed him.

He encouraged her to see that world as he did, and she packed books that reflected his enthusiasms. She left behind her usual Henry James and took instead *The Light that Failed*, *Kim*, *Just So Stories*, and *Plain Tales from the Hills*.[47] The literature cast its spell, and she saw Asia through his eyes and with him at its center. When she visited Peking (Beijing), she let Straight take her "templing" (as they called it) around the countryside, and was quite sure, as she wrote a friend, that he was "a famous man all over China and up in Manchuria . . . we . . . hear words of praise of him on every side and people loved him as much as they admired him." She—with, of course, her friend Beatrice Bend—toured the temples, the cities, and the countryside with Straight and his deputy. The experience persuaded Whitney that "they are serving their country in a way that makes one proud."[48] It overwhelmed her, and even after she left Straight's presence, she still felt his influence as she traveled through India. Writing to a friend about a Kipling poem that began "Alone upon the Housetops," she confessed, "Willard Straight used to sing it often to us in Peking—but I never really felt the atmosphere of it until I came to India."[49]

It is well here to remember the truly mundane nature of Straight's everyday work, which consisted almost entirely of seeing to it that the American bankers he represented got a fair percentage—along with British, French, Russian, Japanese, and German bankers—of loans made to the Chinese government, which wanted to build railroads. In the basic business of it, there was little romance except what Straight put there. Thus when Whitney fell in love with him and admired him, it was for his "desire for work and accomplishment of what is worthwhile"—qual-

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ities she had said she hoped to find. She recognized in him a kindred sense of "what is worthwhile," and a willingness to pursue it.[50]

But though she acted as if he had quite succeeded in the romantic department, she meant to test him, to be sure of him. She had come too far in her own life to squander her resources in a conventional marriage. If he had made her see his point of view with the appropriate books, then she would do likewise. She dispatched him a copy of a recent novel on marriage, having marked especially important passages. Then she waited to see what he would say.

The book was *Open Country*, by Maurice Hewlett. In it, a visionary man woos and loses a young woman whose principal attraction is her "lovely mind."[51] In the end she chooses someone else—the wrong sort of man, but ultimately a safer husband than a visionary who sees only ideals and not real women. Straight got the point immediately: "I shall have to compress within the limits of a letter—an endorsement of the premises with a rebuttal of the conclusions."[52] He knew he bore a certain resemblance to the noble, idealistic loser: indeed, nobly and idealistically losing had become something of a specialty of his, as he tilted at imperialist windmills. But he understood, too, the noble loser's fault: he "was more in love with the garments of his own weaving that he hung upon Her" than he was with the lovely mind herself. At the same time, he approved of the idealist's view that marriage required a voluntary and equal assent: "The tie must be accepted . . . and not a shackle at all but a golden bond—that gives solemnity and sets a seal . . . for we are all subject more or less to the sentimental influence of tradition—upon the Greatest Thing in the World."[53]

In Hewlett's description of his heroine—"very much in earnest, using incisive phrases, surveying life as a whole with a calmness"—one sentence especially suggests a point of identification with Dorothy Whitney: "She had too much character to relinquish the habits in which she had been bred simply because she was being swept off her feet."[54] Throughout her Asian sojourn she kept her head, sustaining by correspondence the Junior League House project and considering what she might get out of a marriage. She needed to know on accepting a proposal that the union would give her room for the life she had and not require her to surrender or subordinate it. If she found Straight's courtship romantic—and she certainly did—she also knew the perils of too much romance, for people could not expect their lives to proceed according to the narratives

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of sentimental novels. So she tested Straight, pushing him to speak for himself on the matter of what marriage could be. He understood. The ideal of equal partnership had to apply, and had to accommodate not only the mythical roles of ideal men and women, but respect for the actual aspirations of real men and women. Hence his endorsement of the ideal premises and his rebuttal of the conclusions. Contrary to Hewlett, the lovely mind should marry the noble dreamer, loser though he might presently seem. Whitney agreed.

There remained in Straight's mind one excessively romantic notion: that he and Whitney might make their life in China. The idea reflected nothing so much as his naïveté, for he had climbed very far very fast and he had no concrete experience of her metropolitan life and so no idea of its roots in the American city that sustained it. When he wanted to press his suit, he could not take it to her parents, so he did the next best thing and broached the subject to the partners of the banking group who, though they might not have been of Whitney's circle, nevertheless knew that its circumference did not extend so far as Asia. One can well imagine the smile on the face of Mortimer Schiff (of Kuhn, Loeb) when Straight told him about his courtship of Whitney. "He laughed and asked me if I expected to support you on twelve thousand a year," Straight wrote. Schiff had continued: "We'll bring you home—you can't live in China with her—we'll find something in finance in New York that will enable you to support her—so that you need have no apprehension."[55]

Apart from Straight's naïveté, there was the matter of his history. Some people whispered that he was the sort who "wished to marry 'a very rich girl.' "[56] And it seemed there was more to it than whispering. An ally of Straight's had warned him, he wrote: "There have apparently been lots of stories about me—She said she was glad to know the facts—for she'd heard quite a lot—but that she'd always had faith in me—and . . . had always defended me. She told me that people were talking about us."[57] For himself, Straight had put all his cards on the table to Whitney, including the story that he "was supposed to have been engaged to Mary [Harriman]." But the community to which she belonged was apparently a little exercised on her behalf. After all, in the absence of parents, somebody had to look after a single woman's interests, they believed. Straight's sponsors—Morgan partners and diplomats—stood up for him, but some members of the community, and the newspapers, could not resist the chance to wallow in innuendo. In its profile of "Willard Straight, Who

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Is to Marry Dorothy Whitney," the *New York Times* laid it on especially thick:

> Miss Whitney was seized with a desire to visit China. She crossed the Pacific Ocean, as Miss Harriman had crossed it. She visited Mukden, as Miss Harriman had visited it. She met the big, healthy looking, forcible American Consul General, just as Miss Harriman had met him, and, like Miss Harriman, she fell in love with him.[58]

And in the end, what if Straight did need to marry money? If he did, it was because he needed fuel for his ambition, not because he wanted to spend it on polo ponies. Dorothy Whitney, for her part, wanted to marry an ambition equal and parallel to her own. She had long been looking for someone who understood this wish, and she believed she had found him. They made one concession to the unsettled state of community opinion and chose to marry in Geneva, to avoid a New York "circus."[59] They were married in the Etat Civil on the morning of 7 September 1911 and had a church ceremony that afternoon. There were only six guests—the Bends, mother and daughter; Whitney's brothers Payne and Harry; and (representing Straight) two old China hands. That evening the newlyweds began a trip that would take them across Siberia to China.

Straight had loose ends to tie up in Peking and Manchuria, but the couple knew exactly where they would go after seeing to business in China. As Whitney wrote, "I had a long talk with T. R. on Sunday—and I felt afterwards that the best thing for a few years might be the staying-home game and getting into things here. . . . I am terribly excited over some work I am trying to do."[60] Straight had written, "We'll be in this game up to our necks one of these days,"—though he sometimes worried that Roosevelt was "a fanatic."[61] She would try to convince him otherwise. She packed a Rooseveltian text for her honeymoon trip—Herbert Croly's *The Promise of American Life.* But when they arrived in China she was reading Carlyle's *French Revolution*, an unhappy choice: a revolt then beginning in Hankow would somewhat delay their entry into the home game of Rooseveltian Progressivism.

Given her hardheaded expectations ("Of course," she had written, "the man one marries cannot be all one dreams of having him—and I am fully expectant of disappointments") it is unsurprising that she now wrote, "Married life seems almost too good sometimes."[62] Their life together was immediately exciting. With the revolt that began in Hankow, the

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Manchu government suddenly lost its authority to negotiate, and Straight had to scramble to find out just who had power. It was all fascinating—and all of it was on his side of the household. Dorothy hosted teas, dinners, talks; Willard hosted hurried meetings, angry whisperings, and blind connivings. Dorothy remained sure that, especially in times of revolution, there were tremendously interesting things going on in men's sphere: "I had a very dull French lesson this morning while Willard had a very interesting interview with Alfred Sze" (his old friend from Cornell was maneuvering for a place among the shifting coalitions).[63] And so it went: standard diplomatic parties were "boring"; lunches with generals, colonels, members of the royal family, and other major players were much more "interesting."[64] But in this time of crisis, she had to let Willard play out his hand.

On 12 February 1912 the Qing emperor abdicated. By the end of March, the Straights had left Peking for England, where the various national banking groups would try to salvage their loan agreements. When she left, Dorothy Straight wrote in her diary that she felt sick. She was pregnant.[65]

While bearing a first baby it would have been normal for Dorothy to be home and among friends—the chief candidates were Beatrice Bend and her mother. When she married, her constant guardian had at last left her side. Bend's mother wrote that she "was as brave as you might expect and we talked about the last few days and the future, but it was hard hard hard."[66] Because Willard Straight was a natural diplomat, he knew what and who was important, and he had tried to get the Bends' approval the previous spring. He knew he was in trouble by December 1911, when because of professional complications he had not returned home with Dorothy. He wrote that the delays were not his fault, though "I'll reluctantly accept the stigma—for I assure you when I promised a speedy return I had no idea that we were going to arrive on the very day the Dogs of Revolt began to bark." By summer 1912 he knew he truly had some explaining to do, as he worried the Bends would think him a "gold brick artist . . . who had lured her away—and bamboozled you—with false pretences [*sic*]." He sensed he was getting the worst of it in a circle of feminine communication: "Dorothy showed me one of your letters in which you quoted Amy [Bend, Beatrice's sister] as saying that I had told her we might be here for a couple of months. I may have said that—but not wittingly . . . after past experience I always say 'I don't know—maybe two weeks maybe two months.' "[67]

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In the end, Bend wrote Dorothy, "I fancy it will end in your having the baby in England. Let me know as soon as you decide about it for in that case I would go over." She gave Willard the benefit of the doubt: "You are very fortunate to have married such a man and it gives me a nice comfortable feeling for your future. Of course you deserve it but you might have married other men who would not have been as satisfactory as he is to you in every way."[68]

With Dorothy's involvement in Progressivism on hold, Bend served as her proxy, reporting on the campaign. She watched as TR grew stronger and Taft got "flabby"; the race of the conventional party candidates seemed to her "rather a discouraging state of affairs."[69] In June she went to Chicago for the Republican convention. She wrote that Dorothy should get details from the papers, "but the papers can't give any idea of the excitement the electrical atmosphere of it all." After she toured Hull House and the city's playgrounds ("How I wish we had such things in New York, also the open air schools etc") she went to the meetings. "We get all the Roosevelt dope from Alice [Roosevelt] Longworth . . . and all the Taft dope from [Nicholas Murray] Butler. . . . Oh Dorothy it is all such fun. How I wish you were here you would love it." Alice Longworth knew her father was going to bolt the party. When he did, the tension rose. Delegates quarreled and occasionally punched one another. On 23 June, Bend wrote that she had sat on the stage while Roosevelt announced the new party.

> It was packed with thousands of people clammering [*sic*] to get in. . . . Roosevelt was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm the delegates from the national convention who had refused to vote marched in with their banners shouting their different slogans and there were deafening cries of we want Teddy and the song which every one is singing to the Turkey Trot music—Instead of "Everybody's doing it Turkey trot" it now runs "Everybody's yelling it Roosevelt Roosevelt." It is very catchy and when the bands play it in hotels or conventions everybody sings it. At the Roosevelt meeting we assisted at the birth of the new progressive party. We did not get back to the hotel until 2 A.M.[70]

All their people were there in Chicago—the Longworths, the Butlers, the Griscoms, an assorted Vanderbilt or two. Roosevelt was in his element

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and the excitement was high. And Dorothy was pregnant, in the Deepdene, in Dorking, England, while her husband fretted over ways the bankers could agree with some Chinese of dubious authority on how to prop up the sinking tael. In August, the Straights boarded ship for New York.[71]

They moved into Dorothy's house on Long Island. She went to town as often as she could, but her doctor sent her to bed in early November. She and Willard read together and she helped him when she could, rehearsing with him a dinner speech on the Chinese loans he would give at Delmonico's. Beatrice Bend came out from the city to stay through the end of her pregnancy. She brought H. G. Wells's new book *Marriage* to read to Dorothy while they waited.

Bend's choice reflected once again the concerns Dorothy faced while trying to integrate her marriage into the world she knew. Wells's book relates the story of a young husband and wife who must discover that the world, and therefore marriage, are now different because women are emerging from the home to get their educations and take on new roles on the world. Like contemporary feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Wells's characters argue that "Sex . . . has got hold of the women tighter than it has the men," and as "women begin to be released," marriage must become more an object of scrutiny, to be consciously redefined rather than accepted. Wells's reform-minded heroine has ultimately to pry her husband away from the world of business so they can realize their shared vision of a public partnership resulting from marriage.[72]

Dorothy Whitney Straight herself, despite her inheritance and her freedom from parental scrutiny, despite having made her own decision whom to marry ("in spite of the comments of her friends," the *New York Press* remarked in an article of this period),[73] despite having negotiated a new perspective on marriage with her husband, still found herself in a traditional predicament. She meant to bring her husband's ambition into her own world of reform, and through her partnership with him make her own mark on the political world that so held her interest. Instead her marriage had so far kept her in a domestic world away from what she liked: "Town!" as she wrote in her diary when she was able to return.[74] And meanw hile, her husband worked at what had, since the revolution in China, become a traditional desk job. When he was home, he sat close by her bed, sketching or painting while Beatrice Bend read. On 6 November, Dorothy gave birth to a son, Whitney Willard Straight. Through

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the rest of the month, most evenings Willard Straight stayed in the city until 8:00.[75]

The courtship and early marriage of the Straights reveals the troublesome character of marriage and gender roles for self-conscious, educated men and women in these years. Both of them set themselves apart from the roles they were expected to play—she by deferring and redefining marriage, he by rejecting and redefining standardized masculine behavior. They struggled to arrive together at a version of marriage that would fulfill their expectations of working together and were almost overtaken by the weight of tradition.

They communicated with each other not only by telling one another their ambitions, but by comparing themselves with received notions of what they should be. Perhaps it was only natural that, as orphans, they should have resorted to texts: their parents had scarcely lived long enough to shape their lives, and to find out what others expected of them they looked to stories in the public sphere. Consequently, as he wrote to her, their desire for each other could be expressed as "I want to mark books with you—as well as for you."[76]

To have lived briefly, cozily together, far away from the demands of the world, would have made Dorothy happy—"just like Kipling's story 'A Habitation Deferred,'" as she wrote.[77] The romance of Kipling—Kipling as filtered through Morse Stephens and Straight—would suit her for the length of a honeymoon. But the sojourn lasted longer than they had planned, and kept her from the world she loved. Now an ordinary marriage loomed—a child, and a husband always away in Wall Street. As she wrote, "I don't find much joy in reading when I can't talk over my books with you."[78] In it there was little of the significant camaraderie Willard had expressed when he urged her to "walk with me—arm in arm child—through life and all that it means—between us we may be able to be of a little use in the world."[79] Now that their life together had commenced, he was often away, came home late and tired and wanting quiet, and she felt, by her own account, "injured."[80]

In Wells's novel *Marriage*, the ambitious couple concludes their reassessment of the institution by resolving to represent themselves to the world as a team dedicated to reform. They mean to accomplish it through producing social "criticism. But everything that matters is criticism!"[81] Throughout Dorothy's pregnancy, Beatrice Bend had kept her in touch with the larger world and the politics that interested her. At the close of her pregnancy, she brought to her, and read to her, this book

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that suggested what a marriage ought to be in a world of changing gender roles, and that implied once again a sense of the "social obligations" of her class. When Dorothy Straight emerged from bearing and nursing her first child, she set about reforming her marriage along these lines.

THE SHADOW OF A MARRIAGE

The proposed project of social criticism, to fulfill a mission of social leadership, developed from the shared elements of their ambitions. Both of them believed they must assume a position of superiority to the powerless of their world, and nurture and educate them to the point where they might control their own destinies. In both Straight's imperialism and in Whitney's social feminism, there lurked an implicit realization that their standards (of behavior, of citizenship, of educated intelligence) were the only standards. This assumption—rarely articulated, never interrogated—made reform a moral responsibility for men and women with the ability to undertake it.

Once Roosevelt had lost the election of 1912, making Woodrow Wilson the first Democratic president since Grover Cleveland, the various sources of reform energy that the Rough Rider had concentrated in his personal crusade found fresh channels to flood. The season of 1913–14 saw a profusion of reforms sprout on legislative and extragovernmental agendas. The new president also gave Dorothy Straight an opportunity: in a short-lived flush of anti-Hamiltonianism, Wilson withdrew U.S. support from the banking group for which Straight had so long labored. Willard Straight, out of a job, had lost his empire and now needed a new role. Dorothy Straight would see to it that they would together transform their marriage, and their society.

The *New Republic* was an institution that was the shadow of a marriage, not of a man. Dorothy had read Herbert Croly's *The Promise of American Life* to Willard as they sailed away from China the preceding spring. On 8 June 1913, Herbert Croly, who had been only a paper presence in the Straights' lives, showed up on Long Island for lunch with Willard and Beatrice Bend.[82] Dorothy was busy looking after the new baby; as when she was pregnant, Bend was her proxy in political matters. Dorothy wanted her husband to have something worthwhile to do, that she could share. Both had found Croly's *Promise* provocative: it was possible that the parallels between their agendas might emerge, filtered

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through Croly, and prove useful in establishing guidelines for a new project.

The *New Republic* grew out of Dorothy's understanding of her husband's imagination. She decided to pay for the magazine to realize her ambitions for a joint project, which meant that it had also to suit what she called Willard's "high minded devotion to the principle of Right" (which, she said, "has been a very wonderful inspiration to your wife").[83] This sense of Right was inextricable from his idea of empire, and Willard Straight's ideal empire was supposed to be an agency for fostering self-government. Croly's plans for home echoed Straight's plans abroad. Like Willard, Croly believed that self-rule came only with time and education, and that present-day elites had an obligation to hasten that process, without immediately surrendering any of their responsibilities or privileges. In Croly's reformist, the powerful would use centralized (Hamiltonian) means to achieve democratic (Jeffersonian) ends.[84] During one of Croly's habitual funks, Willard set out the symmetry between his imperialism and Croly's progressivism:

> Of course I myself am, at heart, a rank Imperialist. . . . it's only by having more responsibility than you can chew and trying to grow up to it that makes for progress with nations or individuals—there's no difference in the two problems. . . . The people—no matter what their defects—should be given an increasing power so that they may be sobered and educated by their responsibilities until they are able to live up to them. . . . Retraction and retirement and thumb sucking should never be the sermon of the author of the "Promise of American Life." When you feel or think that way you've lost your faith in Democracy.[85]

This passage sums up Willard's reconciliation of imperialism and democracy, of power and justice, which fit Croly's scheme of Hamiltonianism and Jeffersonianism. Willard and Croly recognized, in American society and the world, an existing inequality of power that made injustice inevitable. They both suggested therefore that the powerful had not only to wield their power wisely, but also to extend that power to the people at large. Peoples, just like individual people, needed proper education to take responsibility for themselves and solve their own problems—a notion that mirrored Dorothy Straight's conception of her social obligations. Through the appropriate medium, they could bring people like

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their peers into closer contact with social problems, make them more aware of their obligations, and give rise to new projects.

Croly and his wife hit it off with the Straights, and the couples soon spent mealtimes and weekends together. On 8 November 1913, at home on Long Island, the Straights held a conference about the *Republic*, as the project was then called; present, in addition to Dorothy and Willard, were the Crolys, the Learned Hands, lawyer George Rublee, journalist Philip Littell, and Felix Frankfurter.[86] During the next year, Croly accepted Dorothy's offer of financial assistance and quit his job editing the *Architectural Record,* and the venture got its headquarters at 419 and 421 West Twenty-first Street, which the Straights bought from a financially strapped Croly.[87]

If the philosophy of the magazine marked a conjunction that Dorothy perceived between Willard's and Croly's interests, so did the headquarters. Both men liked cigars, antiques, and the clubby atmosphere of New York men's society. The *New Republic*'s offices were furnished to these tastes.[88] The central feature was the round table, to which great names would be invited, served dinner cooked by the in-house staff, and where the guests were then themselves grilled by the editors and publishers. For the first few years of the journal's existence, that table was Willard Straight's territory. Felix Frankfurter remembered that Croly "could hardly open his mouth. Somebody else had to do the inciting and the interchanges that keep a dinner table going, if it goes. If it had depended on Croly, there would have been an eternal frost."[89] Willard could begin the talking and keep it going, as well as hold forth for himself and smooth over differences between others. Croly envied Willard his abilities and was grateful for the performance of services he could not himself provide: "You were in great form the night of our last dinner, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart."[90]

Willard, the natural and practiced diplomat, performed his role of publisher splendidly. Few of the editors knew, and fewer trusted, the others. Croly did not trust his brood of young "radicals," nor did they trust him—or each other: Francis Hackett did not trust Croly; Philip Littell did not trust Willard Straight; and nobody trusted the too-evidently-brilliant Walter Lippmann; but over the project's early months they learned to work with each other. Hackett did not like being published (as he saw it) by Wall Street, but soon found Willard "thoroughly satisfactory"; Littell found it striking that Willard "could unite such fighting force with such a deep-seated tolerance." Within a year of the journal's founding,

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Straight resigned his post at J. P. Morgan. Eventually one of the editors would take the Straights for a model: Walter Lippmann wrote that Faye Albertson and he had decided they should end their bohemian romance and marry on account of the example of the Straights.[91]

If the structure of the journal resembled a men's club, it existed within a woman's philosophical and fiscal world, as Dorothy gave shape to the journal and its aims. Theodore Roosevelt liked *The Promise of American Life,* not only because it praised him, but because both progressive judge Learned Hand and conservative leader Henry Cabot Lodge recommended it to his attention.[92] Croly's first book had something for both: a Jeffersonian future, a Hamiltonian present—partly because he was trying to appeal to an upper-class patron, specifically the boyishly heroic Roosevelt. By the time he wrote *Progressive Democracy*,[93] he had given up on Roosevelt because he and the Straights had found each other. The later book reflects their joint hopes and beliefs; some of its key passages come from Croly's speech on the founding of the *New Republic*, and it probably originated in a report they commissioned from Croly on a plan for social education.[94] The reliance on Rooseveltian heroes vanished from the second book. Instead, Croly presented what the title suggested: a vision of American life growing gradually more egalitarian. In *Progressive Democracy*, the people led themselves to their destiny by appointing appropriate teachers and critics (presumably he and the Straights belonged to this category). "Formative criticism . . . cannot contribute anything to social amelioration which will dispense with the creative power of the democratic faith . . . but it may claim rightly that the social democratic faith is powerless without its assistance."

The popular will must discover an appropriate impulse. "The socially righteous expression of the popular will is to be brought about by frank and complete confidence in its own necessary and ultimate vehicle"—that vehicle being an organ of criticism such as the *New Republic*, which would purvey "education in the deepest and most fruitful meaning of the word."[95] Education was the only just, the only conceivable, role for a privileged class in a society dedicated to democratic ideals. Because only a few people could go to universities, those few incurred an obligation to use their learning for the benefit of society, by working to express articulately the popular will. The credo incorporated an ambivalence about that will, which, on the one hand, was the only legitimate source of authority, and, on the other, had to be prodded and taught.

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Though Dorothy spoke her mind quietly at first, leaving her husband to do the public "holding forth,"[96] she considered the journal their shared responsibility, and "never made an outside engagement for a Friday"—the day the editorial board met. "She was absorbed in the events of the week and how to reflect them and comment on them in next week's paper," one of her friends remembered.[97] The Straights read over the issues together, compiled critiques, and when they were not together, she wrote him her impressions. Just as they had always loved to mark and critique books with each other, now they shaped their own critical narrative of society together.

Croly knew whom he must first please. He constantly communicated with the Straights. Before the journal appeared, he warned them humbly, "The Republic is not even borne. [*sic*] He may not prove to be all his proud parents hope and anticipate."[98] Once it began to appear, and he began to receive their critiques, he wrote Dorothy, "If you are not satisfied, nothing else in the way of success will be any compensation. It is my personal relation to you which dominates the whole business."[99]

She urged the journal toward social seriousness. She could not understand the point of an early piece on auction bridge. A piece on the horrors of the newly begun world war was "banal." She preferred by far Ray Stannard Baker's effort to encapsulate the spirit of the Progressive period as an effort to perfect "the art of living together." As she wrote, the journal must provide "a really deep, constructive foundation of thought."[100]

She generally preferred to exercise indirect influence, but she was quite willing to intervene directly in a matter with which she felt familiar. When New York State's commissioner of charities revealed poor living conditions in Roman Catholic orphanages, the church went on the offensive with an ad hominem attack. Dorothy "was surprised to find that The New Republic knew nothing about the situation. So I am planning to meet Herbert this afternoon and give him the facts."[101] The journal responded quickly, suggesting that even if Catholics did not believe "the history of civilization is the history of secularization," they ought not to declare that the commissioner of charities was a "former hobo or jockey" and bribe other officials not to testify in his behalf. More to the point, the journal cast the issue in terms that reflected Dorothy's primary interests. The problem with the orphanages "was not merely that filth of the most disgusting kind existed. . . . The failures on the educational side were conspicuous," and, they added, the church's position amounted in

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effect to "antagonism to public education as practised [*sic*] in the United States." Reformers, the *New Republic* said, wanted

> to formulate democracy as a positive ideal. . . . The community has certain positive ends to achieve, and if they are to be achieved the community must control the education of the young . . . [which] means the development of the independent powers of judgment in the young. . . . Democracy claims no right to interfere with worship or opinion, but it does claim the right to develop in every child the capacity for testing its own convictions . . . experimental naturalistic aptitudes shall constitute the true education.

Ultimately, the journal argued, to achieve these purposes all dependent children who were "not defective" might go to families for "less mechanical care."[102]

In this exemplary episode, the journal at Dorothy's prodding tackled an issue squarely within her concerns as a Junior Leaguer and a woman reformer at a point where these issues intersected the power politics of New York. It was precisely the sort of intervention she could not have made on her own, but now that she had created a sympathetic political journal within her compass, she could see to it that it confronted issues in which she took an interest, and that it put these issues into the world of men's politics. The recommendations it made at her suggestion once again recapitulated the basic thesis that underlay her and her husband's Progressivism: the importance of education for dependent classes and the essential notion that education must serve the ends of independence. She was happy with making this constructive criticism. And when Willard himself took a turn offering a (pseudonymous) opinion in the journal's pages, he struck the same note: "Paternalism in any form—no matter how beneficial its results—will not ultimately be acceptable," he wrote. "What has hitherto been termed philanthropy—like commerce and industry and politics—will tend gradually to conform to a more democratic ideal." Both Straights envisioned, through a process of social criticism, taking on a parental role that would end in the fulfillment of creating a more democratic society. They knew the journal had "really arrived" when (two months after its inception) teachers began using it in schools. Ultimately, as Willard's other work took him away from New York, her role and his became indistinguishable: as she wrote, if he were away, "well, I've got to be a man—that's all."[103]

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In later years, Dorothy spelled out the journal's fulfillment of the Straights' hopes: "The paper is really extraordinary—and I believe it is going to do more for the education of this country than any other one force I know of. . . . I do believe that The New Republic is the best thing that you and I ever put over."[104]

Though both Straights influenced the *New Republic*'s character and contents, the journal was not their puppet. They agreed that together they would exercise only a single vote in the magazine's councils, and when disagreements arose they kept their peace or, as on the occasion of the editors' endorsement of Wilson in 1916, wrote a letter to the journal.[105] But, as Willard said in that letter, they and the editors were "in essential agreement, both as to our aspirations for *The New Republic* and as to the general cause which it should serve."[106] Indeed, that episode only increased public awareness of the journal's mission, increasing its popularity because it emphasized the paper's principled independence of opinion.[107]

Yet even if the Straights had no official veto, Dorothy had a real one: she paid for the journal's publication and could quit doing so at any time. The *New Republic* originally cost 10 cents an issue, or $4.00 for the year. In 1916, with 17,000 subscribers, it cost $7.00 to produce a one-year-subscription's worth of papers. The Straights paid the difference. In 1953, when their youngest son Michael Straight prepared to give up the journal, he revealed that the Straight family had given it an average of $95,000 per year for thirty-eight years. They never threatened to withdraw funding.[108]

The *New Republic* did two essential things for the reform career of the Straights. It brought Willard's imperialism home and harnessed it to a domestic agenda. He had constructed an imperial ideology that created a duty on the part of colonizer nations to see to the eventual independence of colonized nations. In advocating an end to paternalism in U.S. politics, he was recapitulating at home his imperial mission to end imperial relationships. It also gave Dorothy a way to take part in the world of politics she found so interesting. Through the meetings and the publications of the *New Republic,* she had access to a world from which she had been largely barred. In accomplishing these two ends, the journal allowed the Straights to redefine their marriage as the source of a collaborative reformism. The two of them together now had a text they could mark and shape to their purpose.

During its early years, the *New Republic* was the Straights' most important joint project. It allowed both of them to promulgate their beliefs in the meliorative power of education, broadly construed. Indeed, through

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its columns they could both teach and advocate more teaching. At the same time it allowed them each to abjure the standard prescribed spheres for men and women of their time. They had found a way they could work together in a way that suited their liberal convictions about the proper role of socially powerful people. They could promulgate their politics of an education that meant the end of paternalism and the beginning of true democracy: thus they defined progress. But they had scarcely begun their work before the world began changing under the influence of war.

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