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Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman, a Voice for Progress and Perfection: a Rhetorical Analysis of Selected Addresses, 1883-1892.

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CHARLOTTE PERKINS STETSON GILMAN,
A VOICE FOR PROGRESS AND PERFECTION:
A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ADDRESSES,
1883-1892

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in
The Department of Speech Communication,
Theatre, and
Communication Disorders

by
Stephen Robert Guempel
B.S., Southeast Missouri State University, 1972
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1975
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Abstract

Amidst the social reform impulse of late nineteenth-century America, Charlotte Perkins Stetson— noted writer, lecturer, and social reformer—began her career as a spokeswoman for social justice. As such, she lectured to local religious groups, Nationalist clubs, women's clubs, and literary societies on a variety of subjects that included social ethics, family, motherhood, and art. In these many lectures and sermons, Stetson related her unyielding faith in and fervent expression of humanity's potential for perfectibility. This study analyzes six selected addresses delivered by Stetson between the years 1883 and 1892 in order to identify the rhetorical techniques she used to communicate her vision of human perfectibility.

Divided into nine chapters, Chapters I and IX introduce and conclude the study. Chapter II is predominantly biographical, giving careful attention to those people, experiences, and events in Stetson's life that contributed in an important way to her development as a speaker and reformer. Arranged chronologically according to the date of delivery, each of the next six chapters considers the rhetorical techniques used by Stetson in an individual address.

The standards of judgment used in the criticism of Stetson's speeches are essentially traditional. For every speech the following elements are considered: historical background, social setting and audience, organizational structure, and speaker effectiveness.
In 1898, Stetson published *Women and Economics*, establishing her as an intellectual leader of the women's movement and climaxing almost a decade of lecturing. By examining her speeches delivered between 1883 and 1892, a greater understanding as to the origin and development of those ideas set forth in her book is possible as well as a better comprehension of the rhetorical strategies she used to communicate them. In addition, the critical appraisal of her speeches furnished further identification of the historical underpinnings of contemporary feminism.
CHAPTER I

Introduction

In 1915 an article in the Oregon Sunday Journal typified comments about the life and career of Charlotte Perkins Gilman. It stated,

Perhaps no other woman can communicate with such force and such a thrill the aspirations for social righteousness. Her philosophy is dynamic; it is essentially one of hope, courage, and joy and it is for America today.

At the time of this article, Charlotte Perkins Gilman had been lecturing for approximately twenty-five years. She crisscrossed the country several times on speaking jaunts, advocating various progressive reforms. In addition, she had toured Europe twice, hobnobbing with liberal-minded activists. For many reformers such accomplishments would have constituted a lifetime of work, but for Gilman there was more. Amazingly, she continued to lecture for nearly two more decades. Throughout her long career, complete with its share of praise and criticism, "the apostle of

1 Vella Winter, "Noted Lecturer is Exponent of Wider Feminist Movement," Oregon Sunday Journal, March 28, 1915. Stetson saved the newstory and it can now be found in her collection of papers. See Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library MS, 177, Scrapbook, Vol. 7-8 (Oversize). Hereafter cited as AESL MS. I wish here to express my thanks to the authorities at the Schlesinger Library for permission to consult this MS and particularly Ms. Elizabeth Shelton for supplying helpful information.
progress" never strayed far from the ideas she nurtured and refined in the early 1890's. She consistently advanced a philosophy of social reform that espoused the themes of progress and perfection.

Nevertheless, after her death in 1935, Charlotte Perkins Gilman went practically unknown as a reformer, feminist, and lecturer. It was not until 1956, when historian Carl Degler published his article in the American Quarterly entitled "Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism," that she gained her rightful place in woman's history. Since then various scholarly articles, monographs, and histories have discussed Gilman's contribution to feminism and social reform. For example, William O'Neill in Everyone Was Brave included her as one of ten women who led the woman's movement. Lois Banner in Women in Modern America discussed various radical feminists of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries including Gilman among them. Similarly, William Chafe in The American Woman examined the nature of Gilman's feminism as it related to progressive

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thought. These studies have recognized Charlotte Perkins Gilman as a significant social reform advocate and social philosopher. Yet, she was a lecturer by profession, using the spoken message to convey her thoughts on social justice. Up until now, that part of her life had escaped intensive study. In order to understand more fully Gilman's thoughts on womanhood, economic justice, progress, and perfectionism, the origins of those concepts must first be discovered and examined; that is, where were such ideas nurtured, molded, and refined? In essence, Gilman formulated her thoughts on religion, family, marriage, and economics in her lectures delivered between the years 1883 and 1892.

The Purpose of the Study

This study analyzed six selected addresses delivered by Charlotte Perkins Stetson between the years 1883 and 1892 in order to determine the rhetorical techniques she used to communicate her vision of social progress and perfection. Each speech was a part of a distinct series of lectures delivered by Stetson during the formative years of her speaking career. Those speeches included for analysis were exemplary of her Sunday school talks, lectures on nationalism, women's club addresses, class lectures on domestic sociology, sermons at Hamilton Hall, and Browning club lectures.


7 Although many published works use the name Charlotte Perkins Gilman, I will use Stetson throughout the remainder of the study because it centers around a time when the latter was her name.
In particular, they were indicative of the diversity of subject material that characterized her early lectures, the types of audiences she addressed, and the social occasions on which she delivered them. Additionally, the speeches exemplified the diverse nature of Stetson the reformer. They tell the story of a social evolutionist, nationalist, feminist, efficiency expert, and social gospeller. Most importantly, these early speeches represent the earliest expressions of a social philosophy that Stetson preached for nearly three decades. As such, they are essential to a full understanding and appreciation of Stetson and her thoughts on womanhood, religion, economics, and art.

The Plan

This study is divided into nine chapters. Chapters I and IX introduce and conclude the study. Chapter II, "The Apostle of Progress," is predominantly biographical, giving careful attention to those people, experiences, and events in Stetson's life that contributed in an important way to her development as speaker and reformer. Thus, Stetson's family history, home life, education, and married life are given special attention. Additionally, a brief survey of reform ideologies prevalent in the 1890's is provided, assisting in the placement of her speeches into their proper historical perspective. In this section, the impact of Darwinian evolution upon social theory, the reconciliation of science and religion by liberal Christians, and the rise of the woman's movement are of special concern. Lastly, the chapter looks at Stetson the speechmaker: her speech training, speech preparation, and her delivery techniques.
Arranged chronologically according to the date of delivery, each of the next six chapters analyzes the rhetorical techniques of an individual address. The arrangement of each chapter follows a consistent pattern. For every speech, the following topics are discussed: historical background, the social setting and audience, arrangement of ideas, forms of proof, and immediate and long-term impact.

Methodology

The standards of judgment used in the criticism of Stetson's speeches were essentially traditional. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle systematically examined the public speaking process. Over the years, critics have integrated Aristotelian principles into modern approaches to rhetorical inquiry. Lester Thonssen, A. Craig Baird, and Waldo Braden's Speech Criticism is one example. This study drew upon standards of criticism set forth in it. The principal areas of investigation included the speaker and her background as well as the setting, organizational structure, modes of proof, and effectiveness of each speech. Yet, where they furnished more understanding of the speech and the speaker's strategy, other contemporary critical techniques were occasionally used. Specifically, Alan Monroe and Douglas Ehninger's treatment of the motive appeal in Principles of Speech Communication and Kenneth Burke's concept of dialectical language provided

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additional insight into Stetson's rhetorical strategies, especially as to her use of emotion.  

As a principal standard of judgment, the study analyzed the organizational structure of each speech. In doing so, the analysis investigated such items as thematic emergence, the selection and arrangement of ideas, and elements of the introduction and conclusion. However, the intentions were not merely to discover the methods of arrangement and the order of ideas, but to determine if they were well-adapted to the demands of audience and occasion.

Stetson's use of logical, emotional, and ethical proofs was examined in this study. In analyzing logical proofs, emphasis was given to the identification of implied or stated premises, the structuring of those premises into lines of argument, and assessment as to the reasonableness and appropriateness of the arguments. Aristotle's concept of the enthymeme and his classification of topoi were especially useful in the analysis.  

As for emotional proofs, the study relied primarily upon Aristotle's analysis of emotion. In particular, his discussion


of anger, shame, benevolence, and indignation as well as those conditions and people who normally evoke such feelings formed the core of critical principles used in judging Stetson's emotive appeals.

Another consideration was Stetson's use of ethical appeals. Elements of particular concern included her efforts to reveal a moral character by associating herself and her message with the virtuous; her attempts to establish sagacity by demonstrating broad knowledge, consistent reasoning, and common sense; and her efforts to establish good will by conveying the image of a friend, messenger of truth, and straightforward prophet of progress.

The last standard of judgment assessed Charlotte Stetson's effectiveness in each of the speeches. First, the immediate reaction of the audience was measured. Newspaper accounts, correspondence, and personal recollections were used to determine the impact of a particular speech upon those present. Second, long-term impact of the particular speech upon her lecture-reform career was judged. Specifically, the study attempted to determine if Stetson's early lectures significantly influenced her development as a speaker and contributed to the maturation of her reform ideology.

Although not a standard of judgment used in the analysis of the speeches that follow, a word on authenticity of the speech manuscripts is in order here. Manuscripts examined in this study are located in the Charlotte Perkins Stetson manuscript collection housed in the Arthur and Elisabeth Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College. These manuscripts are the original drafts
written by Stetson, complete with her own editorial comments and changes. Up to 1893, she read from these manuscripts, rarely departing from them. Unfortunately, since these speeches were delivered to small audiences gathered at relatively inconspicuous occasions, few newspapers reported upon them. Where a report does exist, a careful comparison between it and the manuscript was made, revealing strong similarities between the two. Thus, the six speech manuscripts reviewed in this study appear to be accurate transcripts of her addresses.

Contributory Studies

After 1956, social and intellectual historians increasingly recognized the significance of Charlotte Perkins Stetson as a social reformer and feminist. As such, a number of scholarly works appeared that have contributed to the present study by providing insight into Stetson's place as reformer, feminist, and social philosopher in the nineteenth century. In his article on Charlotte Perkins Stetson, Degler examines key elements of her social thought, especially noting her thoughts on the sexual-economic relationship of men and women, women's rights, women's fashion, marriage, and the home. In Everyone Was Brave, O'Neill elevates Stetson to the position of an intellectual leader of the feminist movement. In fact, he felt that Stetson's Women and Economics was "the most influential book ever written by an

American feminist." Also, William Chafe's *The American Woman* contributed to this study by showing the connection between Stetson's social theory, especially home efficiency, and progressive thought.

Additionally, the study drew upon Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order*, which details the establishment of a bureaucratic order in America between 1877-1920. Of particular importance to the present study was his discussion of reform movements in the 1890's and their efforts to establish order in a burgeoning urban-industrial America. Also, Sydney Ahlstrom's *A Religious History of the American People* provided an accurate and perceptive account of the liberal Christian movement's efforts to reconcile new scientific theories and traditional Christian dogma.

Several dissertations have been written about Stetson that contributed to the present study. One of the earliest was completed in 1960 by William Doyle at the University of California. The study, "Charlotte Gilman and the Cycle of Feminist Reform," was the first attempt by an historian to identify in detail the elements of her feminist ideology. As such, Doyle's

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dissertation offers useful historical background about the life of Stetson and discusses various influences that molded her thoughts on feminism. For example, Doyle considered the impact of Lester Ward and his writings upon Stetson, stressing that she depended upon Ward's ideas in formulating her own thoughts on women and their status as human beings. Doyle's study, then, is a scholarly investigation into the origins and development of Stetson's feminism.

In another study, Mary A. Porter examined the writings of Charlotte Stetson. Her study, "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Feminist Paradox," completed in 1975, is divided into three parts. Part One explores her "formative years (1860-1895), the experiences which stimulated the emergence of her feminist ideas." Part Two investigates the relationships that existed between Stetson and her reform contemporaries, emphasizing their shared perspectives upon politics. Part Three examines the emergence of a "second theory of feminism" which she "superimposed upon the first." This new perspective, which emerged after 1911, contended that differences between the sexes were innate. It should be noted that Mary Hill (Porter) has published a portion of her dissertation under the title Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

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20 Porter, p. 7274-A.

Other doctoral dissertations have contributed to this study. Additional clarification of Charlotte Stetson's social thought is provided by Polly-Allen Robinson in "The Social Ethics of Charlotte Perkins Gilman" (1978). Also, in "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Humanist Approach to Feminism" (1976), Helen Jo Potts details the development of Stetson's humanist philosophy and her humanist approach to feminism. As such, it assisted the present study by offering additional insight into the nature and form of her optimistic faith in man and human progress: a faith fully revealed in her sermons and lectures of the 1890's. According to Potts, Stetson considered "herself as a humanist rather than feminist because her interest in women arose from a concern that, as one-half of humanity, their restricted role in society retarded human progress."  

Significance of the Study

Social, economic, and political exigencies of the late nineteenth century spawned a period of intense social reform. Populists, progressive, and feminists, deeply affected by perceived social injustices, launched campaigns to redistribute the nation's wealth and political power. To accomplish these goals, men and women traveled the country addressing small
gatherings of interested citizens. Unfortunately, speech manuscripts were not preserved, leaving newspaper accounts and personal recollections as the only source of information about the speeches. In contrast, Charlotte Perkins Stetson saved many of her manuscripts, leaving speech critics, historians, and other social scientists with documents that explicate with greater precision the dynamic, often fleeting, grassroots movements of the 1890's. Thus, the critical evaluation of Stetson's early speeches contributed additional insight into the nature and roles of several grassroots reform movements of the period. Specifically, the study demonstrated the significance of the Sunday school movement during the late nineteenth century, especially showing that even at the local level liberal Christians were attempting to accommodate science and religion; it provided further clarification of the nature and scope of nationalism as a movement; it showed the importance of women's clubs and literary societies to feminists and other reform advocates in their efforts to initiate social change; and, it contributed further understanding of the origin and nature of scientific management, especially as it concerned domestic science.

In 1898, Charlotte Perkins Stetson published Women and Economics, establishing her as an intellectual leader of the woman's movement and climaxing approximately fifteen years of lecturing. By examining her speeches delivered between 1883 and 1892, a greater understanding as to the origin and development of those thoughts so forcefully set forth in her book was possible as well as a better comprehension of the rhetorical strategies she
used to communicate those ideas. Years before they appeared in *Women and Economics*, Stetson expressed certain fundamental themes in her early lectures, bringing them directly to the people. In general, she attempted to break down the intricate set of myths that surrounded nineteenth-century womanhood. Accordingly, she challenged the Victorian belief that men and women were so different that their social activities were distinct and separate. She urged that such institutions as marriage, motherhood, and home be reexamined. Also, she evoked visions of a future free of sexual subjugation and economic injustice, hoping to inspire mankind to work vigorously for social change.

In addition, the critical appraisal of Stetson's speechmaking furnished further identification of the historical underpinnings of modern feminism. Ideas found in her early speeches linked her with such modern feminists as Simone de Beauvoir and Margaret Mead. In her speeches, she called for equal economic opportunity for women, especially addressing the problems created by a two income household for the family unit. She also centered attention upon other topics that are the focus of contemporary professional investigation. In particular, she spoke on the importance of proper family nutrition, the necessity for improved child care in the home and in day care centers, and the value of pre-school education. Thus, Stetson's early speeches are precursors of the modern feminist movement and are significant additions to the history of feminism. As Marie Hochmuth Nichols stated, "Not only
do the speeches of public men represent the aspirations of the nation, they foreshadow the shape of things to come.25

Lastly, the study demonstrated the usefulness of the traditional style of rhetorical criticism. As a mode of critical inquiry, it enabled the critic to appraise Charlotte Perkins Stetson as a speaker, reformer, and feminist by systematically investigating her background, training, rhetorical techniques, and effectiveness.

Chapter II

The Apostle of Progress: The Life of Charlotte Perkins Stetson

Personal failure and public success characterized the life of Charlotte Perkins Stetson, traits not unheard of in her family history. Family life, friendships, and marriage often were fraught with frustrations and disappointments. As a young girl she observed the impact of abandonment upon her mother and the family. Thomas A. Perkins, Stetson's brother, failed as a student and later as a geologist. Stetson regularly sent money to her brother to help him meet family financial needs and to underwrite sundry business adventures.\footnote{For correspondence between Thomas A. Perkins and Charlotte Perkins Gilman see AESL MS., Family Correspondence, fol. 28.}

Stetson too struggled through several personal traumas. After marrying the artist Charles Walter Stetson, long periods of debilitating nervous hysteria blanketed her life. Fearing for her sanity Stetson decided to leave her husband and child and travel to California. The separation ultimately led to divorce. In addition, Stetson's stormy intimate relationships with female friends reinforced her perception that personal attachments...
eventually ended in emotional tragedy.² It was not until her second marriage to cousin George Houghton Gilman that Charlotte established a stable relationship.

Despite personal problems, Charlotte Perkins Stetson attained national and international notoriety as a writer, speaker, and thinker. She vigorously campaigned for various Populist reforms. Her prodigious lecture schedule brought her into close contact with leading liberal reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She spoke at national and international suffrage meetings, labor rallies, and woman's congresses. Her poetry and prose popularized her as a leading social reformer and Women and Economics established her as an intellectual leader of the feminist movement.

This chapter describes those influences in Stetson's life that most significantly contributed to her development as a speaker. Areas of investigation include family, education, and reading background. In addition, the chapter examines briefly social, economic, and political conditions in the late nineteenth century. Finally, the chapter includes pertinent information on Stetson's speech training, speech preparation, and delivery.

Foundations for a Life of Reform

The Beecher Clan

Peculiar personalities and reform-minded individuals seemed to characterize Stetson's family background. She was a descendant of the famed Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher and indeed reflected the Beecher penchant for nonconformity and social reform. Lyman Beecher focused his fiery sermons upon Catholics, Unitarians, gamblers, and theatre. His progeny were equal to the example he set: his sons became preachers and his daughters religious zealots and social reform advocates.

Henry Ward Beecher was the most illustrious of Lyman Beecher's offspring. Pastor of the Brooklyn Plymouth Church, he electrified and entertained his congregation with the skillful blending of conviction, emotion, and humor. Although she once admitted not liking him, Stetson was similar to Beecher in several ways. First, as advocates of social evolution, both preached that progress and perfection were inherently connected to evolution. Their messages were expressions of optimism concerning

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4 Rugoff, pp. 295-296.

5 Rugoff, p. 297.


7 Journal, 19 Nov. 1879, AESL MS., Vol. 16.
the future of mankind. Second, both individuals suffered humiliating press coverage over personal affairs. The San Francisco Examiner ridiculed Charlotte Perkins Stetson for her inadequacies as a wife while covering her divorce proceedings.\(^8\) Victoria Woodhull, the spiritualist and free love advocate, shocked the Beecher family and the nation with her public announcement of Henry Ward Beecher's adulterous affair with Elizabeth Tilton.\(^9\) Third, despite public embarrassments, both Charlotte and Henry, blessed with the Beecher gift for wit and oratory, acquired national prominence in their respective crusades for women's rights.\(^10\)

The Beecher women were equally influential and provided role models for young Charlotte. Catherine Beecher, Stetson's great aunt, worked endlessly to elevate the station of women. As a young lady, Catherine Beecher suffered periods of depression and alienation because she failed to have a religious experience. Her anxiety was exacerbated by the fact that she was Lyman Beecher's daughter. Resentful of the pressure placed upon her to have a religious rebirth, Beecher substituted religious salvation for the

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\(^8\) "Stetson Objects to Reform," San Francisco Examiner, 20 December 1892. AESL MS., newsclipping, Vol. 3 (Oversize).

\(^9\) Rugoff, pp. 471-503.

salvation of other women. She devoted her life and writings to improving female education in the United States. Sacrifice became a key component in her feminist ideology. She believed that women were closer to the source of moral authority because they were submissive, pure, and domestic. Women's sacrifice to the cult of domesticity established their social centrality in American society. She chose to raise women's status within the domestic sphere.

Catherine Beecher, then, left a body of feminist ideas that stirred Charlotte Stetson's mind and aroused her curiosity. If nothing else, Catherine Beecher provided a strong female role model for young Charlotte. In fact, Stetson thought enough of her great-aunt to name her daughter after Catherine Beecher.

While growing up in New England, Charlotte visited the homes of her relatives, including Isabella Beecher Hooker. Hooker actively campaigned for women's suffrage and formed the New England Woman Suffrage Association. A friend of Victoria Woodhull, Hooker followed the mysticism of spiritualism. In addition, Mary Perkins, Charlotte's mother, was a spiritualist. Although she never adopted the unconventional tenets of

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12 Sklar, pp. 78-89.

13 Hill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, p. 17.

14 Hill, p. 17.

15 Hill, p. 17.
spiritualism, Charlotte's proximity to those that did enhanced and
reinforced her radical ideas concerning women as well as gave
support to her nonconformist tendencies. It was ironic, however,
when Hooker revealed to her suffragist friend Olympia Brown that
Charlotte Gilman's personal life unfitted her for active suffrage
campaigning:

As to Mrs. Perkins Gilman she is all right--a noble woman
of large gifts who has had a history that can't be put into
print. . . . She was divorced from Mr. Stetson--for reasons
satisfactory to them. . . . But I doubt if she can do much
but write books--the world will not pardon peculiarities--
and you may not be able to carry her without injuring your
own usefulness.

The home of Harriet Beecher Stowe became a pleasant refuge
for young Charlotte. Visits to the successful writer's home
inspired a creative spirit that influenced her artistic interests,
particularly painting. She recalled in her autobiography visiting
the Stowe residence in Hartford, Connecticut. She wrote,

Among our pleasantest visits were those at the new big
house of Aunt Harriet Stowe in Hartford. She had built
it, to suit her eager fancy, out of the proceeds of
Uncle Tom's Cabin. . . . From her dainty flower pictures
I got my first desire to paint, and an eager love for
Windsor and Newton's little china dishes.

Charlotte Stetson manifested the Beecher penchant for
oratory, oddity, and reform. The clan, extending its influence
over a hundred years and providing an array of "world servers,"

16 Rugoff, The Beechers, p. 593.

17 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Living of Charlotte Perkins
The Living.
unquestionably affected the unfolding career of Charlotte Perkins Stetson.\textsuperscript{18}

The Perkins Family

In her autobiography, Charlotte Stetson looked back upon her home life. In doing so, she revealed much about the impact her parents, Frederick and Martha Perkins, had upon her career.

Even though Frederick Perkins abandoned the family, he still played an important role in nurturing Charlotte's intellectual curiosity. Perkins shared with his daughter his love for books; yet, she resented the hardship he placed upon the family. She recalled later in her autobiography:

By heredity I owe him much; the Beecher urge to social service, the Beecher wit and gift of words and such small sense of art as I have; but his learning he could not bequeath, and far more than financial care I have grown up in his society.\textsuperscript{15}

Frederick Beecher Perkins was born in 1828 in Hartford, Connecticut. Even as a young man, he revealed a tendency to abandon goals before they were accomplished. He attended Yale University for a time, but never graduated. He then turned to the study of law and was admitted to the bar in 1852; however, he never practiced law. He entered the Connecticut Normal School, where he graduated as a librarian.\textsuperscript{20}

After completing his education at the normal school, Frederick Perkins wandered from one position to another. From

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{18} The Living, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{19} The Living, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{20} Hill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, p. 18.
\end{footnotes}
1854-57 he served in an editorial capacity for the New York Tribune; he worked for a time as a librarian for the Connecticut Historical Society; he became secretary of the Boston Public Library; and, from 1880-1887, he worked for the San Francisco Library.²¹

While moving from one job to another, Perkins managed to become a respected librarian and published writer. According to Charlotte Stetson, "Uncle E. E. Hale told me that he never asked my father a question that he could not immediately answer, or tell him where to find the answer."²² His most noted contribution to the library profession was his "Rational Classification of Literature for Shelving and Cataloguing Books in a Library."²³ In addition to his library interests, he published several short fiction pieces that revealed his romantic view of social problems. As historian Mary Hill observed: "He sympathized with the 'wretched poor,' ennobled them in fiction, and admired the patient faith with which they silently endured their suffering."²⁴

Frederick Perkins married Mary Fitch Westcott (a second cousin) on May 21, 1857. The next eight years the couple produced four children, two dying in early infancy. The two surviving children were Thomas Adie Perkins, born on May 9, 1859, and

²¹ Hill, p. 18.
²² The Living, p. 4.
²³ Stetson clipped and saved several of her father's obituaries which mentioned his article. See AESL MS. Scrapbook, Vol. 7-8(Oversize).
²⁴ Hill, p. 19.
Charlotte Anna Perkins, born on July 3, 1860. Frederick Perkins, however, was not a family man in the traditional sense of the word. He was an itinerant father, moving from one low paying job to another. Unfortunately, his nomadic lifestyle did not include the entire family. Charlotte believed that he left the family as a precautionary measure. Another pregnancy posed potential danger to Mary Perkins' life. His absence obviously lowered the risk of a pregnancy.

Regardless of the reason, his absence posed serious hardships for the family. Mary Perkins had to support a family and home; she did so by opening a school. In addition, the family moved frequently to stay with more affluent relatives. As a result, Charlotte missed out on a formal education. Moving, taking care of sick family members, and tending to house chores kept her from regularly attending school.

Despite the fact that Frederick Perkins was merely an occasional visitor while Charlotte was growing up, he was "a sender of books." In fact, at one point in her autobiography she ruefully observed that he seemed "more the librarian than the father." Nevertheless, he introduced Charlotte to history and social evolution. Among the books that he urged her to read were histories of Greece, Rome and the United States.

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25 Hill, p. 22.
26 The Living, p. 5.
27 The Living, p. 6.
In a letter to Charlotte, he recommended that she read such reform Darwinist works as *Five Great Empires* by George Rawlingson, *Prehistoric Times* by Sir John Lubbock, and *Early History of Mankind* by Edward Tylor. These and other works formed the foundation of a reformist ideology that she articulated so forcefully in her speeches. Frederick Perkins introduced young Charlotte to the study of man as a social being governed by laws of evolution. Under Perkins' guidance and encouragement, she "read long and earnestly" anything that she "could lay hands on as to the life of man. Also as to life in general that I might understand its law."  

Mary Wescott Perkins had an equally significant impact upon the development of Charlotte. She did little in the way of overtly nurturing the intellectual or oratorical capacities of her daughter; rather, she became a case study from which Charlotte deduced attitudes concerning marriage, child care, and sex-typed roles.

Mary Wescott was the daughter of Henry Westcott, a successful merchant from Providence, Rhode Island. She had led a pampered and protected life, steeped in cultural refinement and over-indulged as a young lady. Physically, however, she was a frail woman and frequently incapacitated due to a variety of illnesses.

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30 Letter from Charlotte P. Stetson to George Houghton Gilman, 11 May 1897, AESL MS., fol. 41.
31 *The Living*, pp. 7-8.
In contrast to her "idolized youth," married life was, at least through the eyes of Charlotte, a lesson in the hard facts of life. With marriage, especially in pre-birth control America, came pregnancy and childbirth, particularly traumatic and dangerous undertakings for Mary Perkins. She lost two of her children before they reached a year, and after the fourth child, was advised that a future pregnancy could endanger her life. Additionally, after Frederick Perkins abandoned the family, she faced the difficult task, an embarrassing one in nineteenth-century America, of raising two children alone.

Throughout these difficult times, young Charlotte began to perceive the unjust nature of marriage in the nineteenth century. Writing about an acquaintance, she reflected the impact of her mother's experience upon her own perception of marriage. She wrote,

She is "another victim." Young, girlish, inexperienced, sickly, with a sickly child, and no servant; and now very sick herself. Ignorant both and he using his marital rights at her vital expense.

In a letter to Charles Walter Stetson, she revealed her sensitivity to the unfair pressure exerted by society on woman to marry, regardless of inclinations to do otherwise. "Here is a force," she stated, "the strongest known to human nature, which says 'Yield!' and I stand quietly against it."

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32 Hill, p. 22.


At times, Charlotte Stetson cited her mother's romantic nature as a cause for Frederick Perkins' abandonment of the family. She feared that she might make the same mistake. "It appears," she felt, "that I am her daughter."

Stetson confessed to Houghton Gilman, for example, that "as personal love goes I would like to have a rose covered cottage with you--there isn't an absurdity of romance I don't feel equal to." Most of all, she feared that she would make her mother's mistake and would "sicken" Houghton Gilman with "much affection."

In summary, each in their own way, Mary and Frederick Perkins left indelible impressions upon their daughter Charlotte. Frederick Perkins nurtured in Charlotte an interest in ideas and reform. Mary Perkins, on the other hand, was an object lesson in the unfair nature of Victorian marriage, contributing to Charlotte Stetson's resolve to change attitudes and behaviors concerning the institution of marriage.

**Intellectual Training**

Charlotte Stetson received little formal education. She indicated that her total schooling amounted to four years, ending when she was fifteen years old. She did attend for a time the Young Ladies School in Providence. Report cards indicated that

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35 Letter from Charlotte P. Stetson to George Houghton Gilman, 16 Sept. 1898, AESL MS., fol. 54.

36 Letter from Charlotte Perkins Stetson to George Houghton Gilman, 15 Oct. 1898, AESL MS., fol. 56.

37 The Living, p. 19.
she was an average student with frequent absences.\textsuperscript{38} In 1878 she entered the Rhode Island School of Design where she received basic training in drawing.\textsuperscript{39} While at the school of design she developed an interest in anatomy and physical fitness. Charlotte Stetson's interest in anatomy led her to design new clothing styles for women. In a preamble to a series of lectures on women, she set forth her opinion on female attire. "There is just one word," she stated, "that applies to our painfully elaborate costumes of today, and that is upholstery."\textsuperscript{40} She was acutely aware of the restrictive nature of nineteenth-century fashion. Despite her periods of depression, Charlotte Stetson attempted to keep physically fit throughout her life. She exercised frequently by running, bicycle riding, and rowing and was instrumental in opening a gymnasium for women in Providence, Rhode Island. The "conglomerate case of a caddice worm" in which women encased themselves was entirely inappropriate for the fitness-minded Stetson.\textsuperscript{41}

Charlotte Perkins Stetson supplemented her meager education with a considerable amount of reading. For the most part her background in literature was not unlike that of other New England residents. She read, for example, \textit{Jane Eyre}, \textit{A Tale of

\textsuperscript{38} AESL MS., School Calendars, fol. 1a.

\textsuperscript{39} Letter from the Headmaster to Charlotte Perkins, 4 Nov. 1879, AESL MS., fol. 1a.

\textsuperscript{40} Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "The Dress and The Body," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 165.

\textsuperscript{41} "The Dress and The Body," AESL MS., fol. 165.
Two Cities, Don Quixote, and Robinson Crusoe. Her reading interests also included biology, anthropology, and history as well as temperance, free trade, health and diet. However, by the late 1880's, Stetson's interests focused sharply upon women and their position in society. In 1887 she began a course of reading that acquainted her with a variety of works on women. She read Monad's Life and Mission of Woman, describing it as "the rib theory at its utmost." Commenting on another book entitled Women in America, she stated that it was better than Monad in that it allowed woman "duties to Society[sic] as well as husband and child." She also read Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century, simply commenting "Fine." Fuller and Stetson shared similar thoughts concerning the improvement of women's position in society. They shared the attitude that women needed to fulfill themselves both as individuals and, more importantly, as human beings.

Charlotte Stetson was acquainted with the works of South African Olive Schreiner, a radical feminist and writer. She described Schreiner's work as "very good." Although Stetson's Women and Economics (1898) appeared before Schreiner's noteworthy

43 Letter from Charlotte Perkins Stetson to George Houghton Gilman, 11 May 1897, AESL MS., fol. 41.
46 Letter from Charlotte Perkins Stetson to George Houghton Gilman, 22 July 1897, AESL MS., fol. 43.
Women and Labor (1911), the two were similar. Schreiner argued that the race was systematically destroying itself by forcing middle-class women to live passive lives in the home. Only healthy, active, self-reliant women, believed Schreiner, could bear healthy children, not dependent, parasitic creatures. In a similar way, Stetson argued in Women and Economics that women were "parasitic creatures" whose existence literally depended upon the exertions of others. Stetson found Schreiner's work moving and quoted her occasionally in her speeches. According to Stetson, she cried "like a child" when she read Olive Schreiner's "Heaven.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century Edward Bellamy's utopian novel Looking Backward inspired a nationwide movement called nationalism. Stetson read the book and became an active supporter of the movement. She described Looking Backward as "a book of the age in its thought": imaginative, practical and as significant in its contribution to the study of government as Plato's Republic. More important, her keen interest in and

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47 Lois W. Banner, Women in Modern America, p. 104. Schreiner is credited with coining the term sex parasitism, but Charlotte Stetson used the word "parasitic" to describe the position of married women a decade before Schreiner.


49 Diary, 10 March 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.

50 The Impress, II, No. 15, 12 Jan. 1895 and Charlotte P. Stetson, "What is Nationalism," AESL MS., unpublished lecture, fol. 165. The term nationalism as it is used in this study should not be confused with the traditional definition of nationalism which denotes a spirit of fervent patriotism. Rather, the Bellamy-inspired movement was an effort to initiate a plan of social reorganization that would eventually lead to a utopian state.
active support of nationalism presented Stetson with the opportunity to speak to Nationalist clubs. In her lectures, Stetson set out to convince listeners that Bellamy's plan of "organized industry" would produce the greatest amount of wealth and would be "enjoyed by those who produced it."^51 The movement was a catalyst that stirred Stetson into an active public speaking career. For Stetson, the Nationalist lecture circuit enabled her to develop and refine her emerging economic-based feminist ideology.

On the whole, Charlotte Stetson prepared herself well for a life of social reform. She read in a variety of subject areas including evolution, socialism, and women. She became acquainted with the reform Darwinist approach to social evolution and its tenets of progress and perfection. She applied the concept of social evolution to women, advancing the idea that society's present state of economic stagnation was the result of woman's dependence upon man for economic support. Woman's parasitic nature violated a natural law of evolution, derailing man's steady march toward a perfect society. Stetson felt that nationalism offered man his best chance for economic prosperity. Her reading, then, stimulated thought and nurtured ideas that she eventually communicated upon the lecture platform.

Married Life

From the very outset of her courtship with Charles Walter Stetson, Charlotte struggled with the opposing forces of work

\(^51\) "What is Nationalism," AESL MS., fol. 165.
and duty. They met in January of 1882 when Charlotte visited the studio of Charles W. Stetson to listen to his lecture on "Etching." Although not impressed with the lecture, Charlotte liked the artist and his work. Their relationship became serious enough that Stetson proposed marriage. She wrote the following in her diary concerning the prospect of marriage and the antagonistic pull of work and duty:

I knew of course that the time would arrive when I must choose between two lives, but never did I dream that it would come so soon and that the struggle would be so terrible.

Charlotte enjoyed Stetson's companionship, but the prospect of marriage and the ensuing commitment to domestic life made her uncomfortably anxious. Perhaps the memory of her mother's unsuccessful marriage frightened her; perhaps a subconscious desire to live a professional life cautioned her against such a commitment, knowing that "Having a lover means duty to him." Regardless, she felt that her future life with husband Walter would be different than the present, happy companionship that they now shared. She lamented his offer of marriage writing "And now--Why did you, Oh why did you!"

52 For a thorough treatment of Stetson's struggle with her desire to work and the forces of social duty, see Hill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, pp. 3-9.


55 "Thoughts and Figgerings," 3 Nov. 1883, AESL MS., fol. 16.

Charlotte and Walter Stetson were married on May 2, 1884; however, Charlotte’s inner conflict with work and duty soon intruded into the couple’s life. Before she was married, Charlotte led a relatively active life. She helped at times in her mother’s school; she conducted a regular Sunday school class; and, she occasionally attended lectures and the theatre. When she became Charlotte Stetson, she stayed home, alone, and kept the house while Walter left every day for the studio. She resented the arrangement, particularly Walter Stetson’s freedom to leave home and work. In fact, she suggested that he pay "for my services." Domestic duties only increased for Charlotte with the birth of her daughter Katherine on March 23, 1885. Domestic routine and now motherhood closed in on Charlotte causing her to write:

Every morning the same hopeless waking. Every day the same weary drag. To die mere cowardice. Retreat impossible, escape impossible. I let Walter read a letter to Martha in which I tell my grief as strongly as I can. He offers to let me go free, he would do everything in the world for me; but he cannot see how irrevocably bound I am for life. No, unless he die and the baby die, or he change or I change there is no way out. Well.

Charlotte Stetson’s depression led to frequent periods of nervous prostration. In her autobiography she described the ailment in the following way:

The disorder involved a growing melancholia and that, as those know who have tasted it, consists of every painful mental sensation, shame, fear, remorse, a blind oppressed

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confusion, utter weakness, a steady brainache that fills the conscious mind with crowding images of distress. The melancholia was severe enough that Charlotte Stetson even cried while nursing her baby, desperate with the thought "that even motherhood brought no joy." Fortunately for the entire family, Grace Channing, a good friend from Providence, invited Stetson to visit her home in Pasadena, California. The invitation brought new hope for Charlotte "To come back Well!"

Charlotte Stetson found the southern California climate physically invigorating and the Channing residence intellectually stimulating. Grace Channing and Stetson collaborated on various theatrical endeavors, including writing and performing their own plays. Stetson's freedom to pursue her own interests renewed her spirit and reduced her periods of depression. She even looked forward to the day when she would return to her family in New England.

Unfortunately, when she returned to Providence in the spring of 1886 so too did the periods of depression. Only now they were more frequent and severer in intensity. By 1887 the periods of melancholia opened up an irrevocable rift between Walter and Charlotte. On the brink of madness, she began treatments from the noted nerve specialist Dr. S. Weir Mitchell. He prescribed, of

59 The Living, p. 96.
60 The Living, p. 92.
63 The Living, pp. 94-95.
all things, living a domestic life and abstention from literary pursuits.\textsuperscript{64} The treatments exacerbated her despondency. She depicted the morbid affects of the treatment in her autobiographical short story "The Yellow Wallpaper." She described the story in the following way:

'It is a description of a case of nervous breakdown beginning something as mine did, and treated as Dr. S. Weir Mitchell treated me with what I considered the inevitable result, progressive insanity.'\textsuperscript{65}

Largely through the efforts of Grace Channing, Charlotte and Katherine travelled to Pasadena, California, in the fall of 1888. While there, Stetson began to expand her lecture and literary interests and to establish herself as a radical feminist and social activist. The separation from Charles Walter Stetson improved Charlotte's health; however, the strain upon the marriage proved to be disastrous.

Charlotte and Charles Walter Stetson's marriage suffered a slow and agonizing demise. As Charlotte Stetson later recalled in her autobiography:

'Finally, in the fall of '87, in a moment of clear vision, we agreed to separate, to get a divorce. There was no quarrel, no blame for either one, never an unkind word between us, unbroken mutual affection—but it seemed plain that if I went crazy it would do my husband no good, and be a deadly injury to my child.'\textsuperscript{66}

It was not, however, until the spring of 1891 that the Stetsons

\textsuperscript{64} The Living, pp. 95-96.

\textsuperscript{65} The Living, pp. 118-119.

\textsuperscript{66} The Living, p. 96.
initiated formal divorce proceedings. Walter and Charlotte agreed to divorce on the grounds that she deserted the family. Unfortunately, the state of California did not recognize desertion as legal grounds for divorce. Frustrated by the California law, Walter Stetson filed suit in Rhode Island on the grounds of desertion. The San Francisco Examiner picked up the story and gave front-page coverage to the divorce suit. The newspaper story embellished the event to such an extent that Charlotte Stetson emerged as a negligent wife and Walter Stetson a sympathetic, understanding husband. Walter Stetson reportedly offered the following reasons for wanting to divorce his wife:

Our married life for a year or so was quite pleasant, but she early espoused the Bellamy doctrine and began contributing letters on dress reform, discarded corsets, heel boots and the like, and practiced daily in a public gymnasium. She thought it her duty to sacrifice the domestic and conjugal relations for what she felt was called to do in the cause of woman's rights, dress reform, and nationalism.

The divorce proceedings continued for another two years following the Examiner story. During that time Grace Channing, Charlotte's

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68 Papers concerning the divorce of Charlotte and Walter Stetson are in AESL MS., fol. 1.
69 Hill, pp. 190-191.
70 Hill, p. 197.
72 San Francisco Examiner, 20 Dec. 1892. AESL MS., fol. 7-8 (Oversize).
best friend, became romantically involved with Charles Walter Stetson. In fact, they married just two months after the official decree of divorce was issued in April of 1894.73

While suffering with bouts of melancholia and struggling with a divorce, Charlotte Stetson wrote and delivered the speeches under investigation. In order to place these speeches into their proper historical perspective, the focus of this chapter shifts to an examination of social, political, and economic conditions of the period.

The Progressive Spirit

Late nineteenth-century social, political, and economic conditions generated spirited reform movements throughout the United States. Populism, socialism, and feminism were a few such movements. Lester Ward, Henry George, Edward Bellamy, and other intellectuals, writers, and political activists sought to improve living conditions in industrialized America. The themes of progress and perfection united many diverse reform groups seeking a better life for the "masses." Liberal-minded activists believed that a redistribution of wealth and an equalization in the political process would ultimately move society forward and achieve "heaven on earth." Charlotte Perkins Stetson advocated similar views on the progress of society and the perfectibility of man.

73 The official Decree of Divorce is located in AESL MS., fol. 1.
Charles Darwin and his ideas on evolution had considerable impact upon writers, social scientists, and intellectuals of the period. Two schools of thought emerged, social Darwinism and reform Darwinism, that applied the basic concept of evolution to the study of society. Social Darwinists, largely inspired by the writing of Herbert Spencer, argued that the process of social evolution was leading man to eventual perfection; however, man's interference in the process in any way, particularly by the government, would adversely affect the natural order of social evolution. Competition and the self-made man were key components in the rhetoric of social Darwinists. In addition, social Darwinists perceived government regulation of business, education, and social welfare legislation as detrimental to the ultimate goal of a perfect society.

On the other hand, Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd and other reform Darwinists believed that man should play an active role in shaping the process of social evolution. They revived the notion of purpose and planning in society, challenging the concepts of competition and self-interest and promoting the spirit of cooperation between man. Consequently, they believed that government should seek to improve living conditions for all members of a society. In essence, reform Darwinists became the architects of the welfare state.

The spirit of reform Darwinism appeared in the last decade of the nineteenth century in the form of the progressive movement. Progressives sought political and economic changes as well as implementation of social welfare measures. Charlotte Stetson
aligned herself with the moral-religious arm of progressivism commonly referred to as the Social Gospel movement. Led by Washington Gladden, W.D.P. Bliss, and Walter Rauschenbusch, Social Gospel advocates took an evangelical approach to social reform. They believed in the goodness and religiosity of man, and that it was only the unfair, corrupt, and degenerate social conditions that prevented man from showing his benevolence. As a result, they launched a crusade to regenerate American society. Charlotte Stetson exemplified this spirit in her sermon "Reality." In it, she argued that before man sought a higher condition, he should fulfill his duty to the present. She asserted that man's responsibility was to make the world better for future generations, regardless of inherited conditions. Each individual possessed a small piece of the "Divine Life"; however, that spirit was incapable of working in an unhealthy and unjust environment. Thus, all men should strive to improve present conditions by careful examination of the present and past to discover the cause responsible for current economic inequities.  

The woman's movement also experienced a similar surge in enthusiasm and commitment on the part of its proponents during the early years of the progressive era. Suffrage and temperance

enlisted women in collective protest and inspired them to voice their concerns in public. Charlotte Stetson supported the suffrage movement and worked to promote the Anthony amendment. She attended her first woman suffrage convention in 1886. A year later, Alice Stone Blackwell asked Stetson to manage a suffrage column in a Providence paper entitled The People. However, Charlotte Stetson did not focus her attention solely upon suffrage; it was only one component in her much larger feminist ideology.

Woman's heightened sense of sisterhood led to the development of an intricate system of organized camaraderie. In *Women in Modern America*, Lois Banner pointed out that women's organizations expanded in the 1890's for several reasons. New home appliances and industrialized food processing simplified somewhat many time-consuming house chores, leaving the housewife with more leisure time. Moreover, women yearned for some world outside of the home. The progressive impulse of the period provided a suitable outlet for women seeking some worthwhile activity. Accordingly, women organized to fight intemperance, to gain the vote, and to promote social welfare measures. Local clubs formed throughout the country which attracted reform-minded men and women. It was the local woman's club, literary society, Nationalist club, and

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76 In 1891, for instance, Charlotte Stetson was asked by the Woman Suffrage Association of Los Angeles to deliver a speech celebrating the birthday of Susan B. Anthony. Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Beginnings," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 165.


other similar groups that provided Stetson with the opportunity to communicate her vision of progress and perfection.

When Charlotte Perkins Stetson arrived in California in 1888, she mingled with various reform organizations and their membership. She involved herself in nationalism, labor reform, social purity, and woman's suffrage. She made acquaintances in southern California, and they introduced her to other liberal activists. She met Emily Parkhurst, founder of the Pacific Coast Women's Press Association, an organization of women writers; she found support and encouragement from fellow Nationalist Dr. Kellog Lane; and she acquired the respect of numerous feminists including Susan B. Anthony.80

In time, Stetson travelled up the coast to live in northern California. Between the cities of Oakland and San Francisco, she befriended several male and female western regionalist writers including Charles Loomis, Edward Markham, Joaquin Miller and Ina Coolbrith.81 They celebrated the grandeur of the West in their literature. Stetson did the same in a number of poems that appeared in her collection of poetry entitled In This Our World. She found their camaraderie supportive and enjoyed working with them on various crusades.

While in northern California, Stetson engaged actively in several political reform campaigns. In January of 1893, she

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80 Hill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, p. 188.
81 Hill, pp. 210-237.
addressed a ward meeting in Oakland, California. The speech was a campaign document that outlined basic planks of the People's Party platform. In it she attacked corrupt city politics, she called for improvement of education, and she called for the end of railroad monopolies. In respect to the latter, Stetson, along with Markham and Loomis, campaigned to breakup the monopoly held by the Southern Pacific Railroad, a symbol of capitalist corruption.

In many ways, Charlotte Perkins Stetson personified the reform spirit of the 1890's. As a reform Darwinist and Social Gospel advocate, she believed that the elimination of unfair economic practices would eventually revive the beneficent spirit inherent in man. In addition, Stetson was a leading proponent of the woman's movement. Largely through her work in suffrage, labor reform, and nationalism, she developed a web of friends that stretched up and down the Pacific coast. In due time, her efforts brought her national and international recognition. In 1896, the Alameda County Federation of Trades sent Stetson to England as their representative to the International Socialist and Labor Congress. Thus, Charlotte Stetson, who had arrived in California a near mad housewife some eight years earlier, left the West a polished speaker and established disciple of social progress.

84 Hill, p. 283.
Foundations for a Life of Lecturing

The Development of a Public Speaker

Reminiscing about her lecture career, Charlotte Stetson wrote,

All I knew of the art of oratory was something I had read in a newspaper when a child—that a public speaker should address the farthest person in the room, then everyone could hear. That had struck me as good sense, and I had laid it up, to prove most useful now.

Despite the lack of formal training in the art of public speaking, Charlotte Stetson grew up in an environment that included a rich oral tradition and numerous opportunities to develop speaking skills. In the Beecher tradition, she possessed a flair for the pulpit. "It must have been due to pure heredity," she stated, "that I felt perfectly at home in that pulpit as if I had grown up in it." 86

Edward Everett Hale contributed to Stetson's skill and confidence on the speaking platform. She valued her uncle's insightful comments concerning her speeches. She occasionally read her speeches to him for his evaluation. According to Stetson, "He was kind enough to listen to one of my lectures and told me that I put too many ideas into it; that a sermon should have but one, and lecture but two or three." 87 She also had occasion to listen to Hale speak on nationalism and other subjects, and gained practical instruction from his example. 88

85 Gilman, The Living, p. 122.
86 The Living, p. 138.
87 The Living, p. 129.
88 Diary, 29 April 1877. AESL MS., vol. 27.
Charlotte Stetson understood the importance of rational discourse even as a teenager. She established for herself a three-pronged program of self-improvement. She hoped to acquire the habit of "absolute truthfulness," to become more considerate of others, and think before speaking.\textsuperscript{89} Taken together these three goals comprised an early commitment on the part of Stetson to responsible public communication.

She strove throughout her career to communicate a message that she believed would benefit the human race. In essence, she was a humanist, "studying to understand and to advance human progress." She assumed the power called God "as a provable premise; evolution as the world process; humanity as in the highest stage of that process, and as still rising."\textsuperscript{90} She described her socialism as of the "early humanitarian kind" based on Bellamy and other utopian socialists.\textsuperscript{91} In effect, Stetson's self-improvement program generated a commitment to the truth as she understood it; it established a dedication to improvement of the race; and, it fixed a dedication to "see clearly and think boldly and speak wisely and well."\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{89} The Living, pp. 57-60.

\textsuperscript{90} Quoted material came from a promotional circular prepared by the Charlton Company which announced Gilman's lectures for that year. AESL MS., fol. 10.

\textsuperscript{91} The Living, p. 131.

\textsuperscript{92} "Thoughts and Figgerings," 18 Jan. 1898, AESL MS., fol. 16.
As a young girl and throughout her teen-age years Charlotte Stetson participated in a variety of activities that contributed to her development as a speaker. Oral reading of literature was a constant source of entertainment in the Perkins home as well as a vehicle for vocal training. Martha Perkins enjoyed reading tales to her children and they revelled equally in it. Charlotte frequently noted in her journal that she read aloud to herself and to others. For instance, at the age of nineteen she read aloud her valentine at the regular meeting of the Essay Club. On another occasion she recited "Keenan's Charge" to a collection of children and acquaintances. She even participated in a group performance of literature, reading in unison a variety of tales. Such opportunities provided Stetson with practice in vocal expression, enunciation, and rhythm. She acquired from her oral reading a favorable reputation and sufficient skill to give elocution lessons on at least one occasion.

Stetson's rich background in oral interpretation of literature prepared her well for the style of delivery that she used in the early days of her lecture career. For most of the 1890's she read her lectures and sermons from handwritten manuscripts. In 1892 she ventured away from the manuscript and

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93 Hill, p. 28.
96 Journal, 13 March 1879, AESL MS., vol. 15.
the experience provoked her to write: "The first time I have spoken—not read. Do not make a success of it nor enjoy it, but mean to try again." The vocal demands of effective oral reading made Stetson acutely aware of voice and diction and the necessity for training in both. Consequently, she developed a clear voice, well modulated and earnest in expression. One listener remarked after listening to a Stetson speech:

There she was in her full womanhood and her voice carried like a clarion and her clear and distinct enunciation and apt modulation of every word and sentence made a great impression on me at least, as I know it did on others.

When Charlotte Stetson read from a manuscript, she did not deviate much from it. She noted regularly in her diary that she read a lecture to a Nationalist club or woman's club or other gathering. The fact that she used the word "read" to describe her mode of presentation indicated that she did not deviate from the manuscript. It was not until the latter half of the 1890's that she began to use the extempore style of delivery while lecturing.

For several reasons Stetson changed from reading a manuscript to an extemporaneous mode of presentation. First, she matured as a social activist. Stetson refined her thoughts on women, marriage, and the home as the result of ten years of public

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99 In her diary, Stetson mentioned that in order to improve her career as a professional lecturer she needed training in voice and movement. "Thoughts and Figgerings," 1 Jan. 1896, AESL MS., fol. 16.

appearances and a considerable amount of writing, culminating in the publication of *Women and Economics*. Second, and equally important, the hectic decade of the nineties seasoned Stetson as a public speaker. She had ample opportunity to polish her speaking skills and to instill complete confidence in her ability to perform before an audience. Third, she committed to memory a repertoire of stock speeches that enabled her to alter or change a speech to meet the particular needs of an audience. On one occasion, for instance, she was prepared to speak on "Our Brains and What Ails Them" to a woman's club; however, her topic was introduced as "Men, Women, and People." "So between my chair and the front I had to change my subject, and did not mind in the least." 101

In the early 1900's a press release announced Stetson's lectures for that season. The release contained eight general subject headings including ethics, the child, economics, suffrage, education, the woman question, socialism, and a miscellaneous category. A total of thirty lectures was available according to this press release. 102 Examination of similar lecture advertisements indicated repetition of titles, supporting the contention that by 1900 Charlotte Stetson had developed a collection of stock speeches. 103 Considering the fact that she delivered these lectures on numerous occasions and over a number of years, it is not surprising that

101 *The Living*, p. 227.
103 Numerous brochures announcing Stetson's lecture can be found in AESL MS., fol. 10.
Stetson did not have to rely on a prepared text. "This lecturing of mine," she wrote in her autobiography, "after I ceased to write papers, consists of fresh thinking on some topic in which I am vitally interested." As a preacher, for example, she described herself as "always ready." She claimed not to use "oratory"; rather, she "just talked" so that she could be heard and understood without difficulty.

It was remarkable that Stetson had any time to prepare speech manuscripts considering her hectic life in the last decade of the nineteenth century. From 1890-1892 she wrote forty-one speech manuscripts on numerous subjects. According to Stetson, she gave fifty-seven or more sermons and addresses, averaging more than two a week, between January 2 and July 3 of 1896. At this time, she also actively participated in several organizations that required much of her attention. She worked energetically for the New Nation Club, working on its constitution in 1891, serving as corresponding secretary in 1892, and helping to secure a permanent location for the group. She belonged to the Woman's Congress Association of the Pacific Coast, attending its conventions in 1895 and 1896. As a member of this organization, she served as an

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104 The Living, p. 226.
105 The Living, p. 183.
106 Stetson's lecture manuscripts prepared between the years 1890-1892 are available in the AESL MS., fols. 163-169.
107 The Living, p. 198.
executive director. In that capacity, she helped to plan conventions as well as participate in the programs.

During these years too, Stetson produced a prodigious amount of written material. She contributed articles to Kate Field's Washington; she edited for two years The Impress, the official monthly paper of the Pacific Coast Women's Press Association; she published "The Yellow Wallpaper" in the New England Magazine; and a collection of her poetry, In This Our World, appeared in print.

Despite her busy schedule, Stetson developed a consistent pattern of preparation for her lectures and sermons. She typically began the preparation of a manuscript two or three days before it was to be delivered. For example, she started writing her lecture "Our Place Today," delivered to the Woman's Club of Los Angeles, on January 19, 1891, just two days before the scheduled event. Stetson worked on the manuscript on the next day, and finished it on January 21. She followed the same routine for her sermon "Reality." She completed the entire text and delivered it in a total of three days, writing as much as fifteen pages in a day. On another occasion she completed a speech text in three and a half hours, setting down on paper five thousand words.

109 See programs for the 1895-1896 conventions of the Woman's Congress in AESL MS., fol. 4.
Stetson's ability to produce large amounts of written material in a relatively short period of time was a necessity in light of her busy life in the early 1890's. To illustrate the magnitude of her speech manuscript production, Stetson completed the entire domestic sociology lecture series in a four month period, totalling in excess of two hundred handwritten pages. Remarkably, she rarely made extensive revisions of a completed speech text. Extant manuscripts show the occasional deletion or addition of a word or phrase or the revision of a paragraph. But the changes were not substantive in nature; rather, they were more stylistic, searching for the right word or phrase to express a thought. Considering the fact that she normally began preparation of a lecture two or three days before the engagement, Stetson obviously had little time to make extensive revisions of a manuscript.

In 1875 Charlotte Stetson revealed to her father the most "heinous crime," her attraction to the stage. Indeed, she loved to attend the theatre and equally enjoyed engaging in various theatrical activities. At the age of twenty-one, for instance, she performed a "shadow pantomime" at a party. While in California, Charlotte Stetson collaborated with Grace Channing in writing and performing their own plays. In addition, she

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113 Unpublished manuscripts of the entire domestic sociology class series are available in AESL MS., fol. 166.

114 Letter from Charlotte Perkins to Frederick Perkins, n.d. 1875, AESL MS., fol. 37.

joined an amateur acting group and performed various comic parts. Through participation in these activities, Stetson intensified her awareness of body movement, gestures, and facial expression, as well as vocal projection and voice modulation. The opportunity to play before an audience not only heightened her awareness of physical and vocal attributes of delivery, but developed confidence in her ability to perform before groups.

In addition to the oral reading of literature and various dramatic activities, other factors affected the development of Stetson as a speaker. Charlotte Perkins Stetson enjoyed listening to lectures. In fact, she belonged to a lecture club and regularly attended its programs. The club brought in a diverse group of lecturers who spoke on a variety of topics. Some of the subjects that Stetson listened to included evolution, Julius Caesar, spectrology, and palmistry. The opportunity to attend numerous lectures afforded Stetson the chance to observe the strengths and weaknesses of a particular speaker, ultimately contributing to her overall development as a speaker. She attended, for example, a lecture given by Julia Ward Howe on

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116 *The Living*, pp. 111-112.

117 For example, Stetson wrote rather glowingly about her successful performance at a reading club meeting. She stated, "Cover myself with glory by my performance." Such self-praise indicated Stetson's growing confidence in her ability to perform before an audience. *Journal*, 3 Feb. 1882, AESL MS., vol. 18.

matrimony, a favorite subject of Stetson. She reacted favorably to Howe's message, but indicated dissatisfaction with Howe's views on marriage when she commented, "Not new, but good." 119

Charlotte Stetson's church involvement also nurtured her skill in oratory. In 1877 she had the opportunity to listen to the "Great shakers" Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey. 120 She participated in a Bible class that met twice a week. She occasionally had to prepare oral reports to the class on specific subjects. On one such occasion she read a report on the state of Egypt at the time of the Hebrew immigration. 121 She found the occasion rewarding and stimulated in her a positive attitude toward speaking in public. By 1882 she was teaching her own Sunday school class, preparing her lessons in manuscript form to be read to her class, a routine in delivery that persisted for at least another fifteen years. 122 As a result of her Sunday school teaching duties, Stetson had the opportunity to attend a Sunday School Teacher's conference. At this conference she spoke for the first time at a formal meeting and enjoyed the opportunity to address the group. 123

In her autobiography Charlotte Perkins Stetson claimed not to have any training in public speaking. On the other hand, she had

120 Diary, 19 Dec. 1877, AESL MS., vol. 27.
ample opportunity to develop her speaking skills. Oral reading, theatre, and Sunday school provided her with sufficient experience to acquire the skills necessary to deliver an articulate address. Unfortunately, her vocal skills were often overshadowed by her physical appearance upon the lecture platform.

Physical Appearance

Charlotte Perkins Stetson weighed approximately one hundred and twenty pounds and stood five and a half feet tall. She described herself in the following way:


Physically, Stetson was a slender woman, athletic in appearance yet graceful in manner and action. She enjoyed participating in a variety of athletic activities that contributed to a healthy, agile appearance on the speaker's platform. She found riding the bicycle a particularly pleasant activity. She believed that it made women more aware of their feet and legs which were unnecessarily hidden under a vast array of petticoats. More important, it enabled women to experience the thrill of power and the opportunity to develop poise.

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126 "On How to be Good," Topeka State Journal, June 1896, AESL MS., Scrapbook, fol. 7-8 (Oversize).
127 Rochester Herald, 26 July 1899, AESL MS., Scrapbook, fol. 7-8 (Oversize).
physical fitness paid her dividends when she stepped upon the speaker's platform. She conveyed the image of a "healthy, happy, vigorous woman" who had a purpose in life and the commitment to attain it.128

Unfortunately, Stetson's athletic appearance and vivacious manner became a topic of journalistic debate. Those who subscribed to the Victorian image of a submissive woman found Stetson's image shocking. On more than one occasion she was ridiculed for her "masculine presence" and touch of "Western gaucherie."129 Such criticism, on the other hand, stimulated countercharges as well. "Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Stetson," explained The Salt Lake Herald, "isn't as masculine and strong minded as many of her critics would have their readers believe." In fact, the same article admitted that Stetson was very much a "womanly woman."130

Stetson was an attractive woman. Deep-set and unusually dark eyes accentuated her long, thin face and milky white complexion. She typically combed her hair straight back and in a bun. While speaking Stetson revealed her enthusiastic commitment to social reform through a "constant play of vivid [facial] expression."131


129 From unidentified newspaper clipping in a Stetson scrapbook. AESL MS., Scrapbook, fol. 7-8 (Oversize).

130 "Most Famous of New Women Now Visiting Salt Lake," The Salt Lake City Herald, 26 Nov. 1899, AESL MS., Scrapbook, fol. 7-8 (Oversize).

131 The Daily News, 28 Nov. 1899, AESL MS., Scrapbook, fol. 7-8 (Oversize).
She displayed frequently her attractive smile that evoked favorable responses from even her harshest critics. Nellie Bly, for instance, wrote that "Charlotte Perkins Stetson has a long name, a large vocabulary, a good voice, an attractive smile and magnificent thinking faculties . . ." Stetson, then, combined a strong physical appearance with an expressive face to convey the image of a woman committed to a cause.

Stetson dressed unconventionally by Victorian standards. She made no effort to conceal the fact that she believed woman's dress was restrictive and unhealthy. However, she did not attempt to shock her audience with strange or exotic outfits. Unlike the bloomer craze of the mid-nineteenth century that openly flouted current woman's fashion, Stetson dressed in a neat, attractive fashion. Her clothes were simple and tasteful; yet they did not include the tightly-drawn corset or the layers of petticoats normally associated with woman's attire. Nellie Bly attacked Stetson for her unconventional attire. Her attack, however, really pointed-up Stetson's effort to dress tastefully and comfortably. She wrote,

But oh, how she dresses! I fear she is daft on dress reform or some other abomination. She was decidedly wider at the waist than she was below it. We did not need to be told that she was corsetless, and, I fear, petticoatless! Her suit was a mud-colored cloth, the waist being low-necked and double-breasted, and the short scant skirt hung every way but pretty.

132 "Nellie Bly with the Female Suffragists," The World, 26 Jan. 1896, AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 3 (Oversize).

133 The World, 26 Jan. 1896, AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 3 (Oversize).
The Final Years

After the turn of the century, Charlotte Stetson's life changed in two significant ways. First, she married her second cousin George Houghton Gilman in June of 1900. They remained happily married for thirty-four years. Each pursued his or her professional interests: Charlotte continued to lecture and to write and Houghton Gilman worked at his law practice. While married to Houghton, Charlotte Gilman published several works including Concerning Children (1900), Human Work (1903), The Home (1904), His Religion and Hers (1923), and Social Ethics (1923). The marriage ended suddenly when Houghton died on May 4, 1934.

The other significant change in Charlotte's life involved her lecture career. After 1900 she became a professional lecturer complete with booking agents to manage her schedule of appearances. She enlisted the services of such well known booking agents of the period as William B. Feakins and James B. Pond. \(^{134}\) In order to make her message more appealing to larger segments of the population, she toned down many of her radical thoughts on women, the home, and raising children to be less shocking and controversial. In fact, one promotional brochure announced that Stetson was not a feminist; rather, she was a humanist intent on

\(^{134}\) See various promotional materials developed by various agents representing Gilman including The Charlton Co., The Pond Agency, and the William B. Feakins Agency, AESL MS., fol. 10.
making the world a better place to live for all human beings. She became, in essence, an inspirational prophet of progress and less the advocate of radical social change.

In 1932 Charlotte Gilman was diagnosed as having breast cancer. She understood the painful, agonizing death that came with cancer. During her traumatic divorce suit, Charlotte had to care for her mother as she slowly died from cancer. Determined that members of her family should not have to endure similar hardships, she ended her life on August 17, 1935.

Wanting in both formal education and speech training, Charlotte depended upon desire and experience to prepare for a life of social reform and professional speaker. Her interest in science, literature, and religion put her in touch with liberal ideologies while oral reading, lecture clubs, and theatre acquainted her with the skills of performance. But it was her interest in religion that initiated her speaking career. In a small classroom occupied by young religious students, she articulated her thoughts and ideas on the progress of humanity.

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135 Publicity material promoting a "Gilman Week" of lectures indicated that Gilman disclaimed the term "feminism." She was quoted as stating, "I am only interested in women because they are half of humanity, and because their misplacement in social relations holds back all of the world." AESL MS., fol. 10.
Chapter III

"Belief in God and the Use of It"

As a young woman, Charlotte Stetson participated in the Sunday school movement flourishing in the mid-nineteenth century. As Sydney Ahlstrom observed, "The Sunday school became a familiar American institution, and in many congregations the 'Bible class' overshadowed the regular Sabbath worship."\(^1\) Stetson taught a Sunday school class and conscientiously carried out her instructional duties.\(^2\) In fact, she was so conscientious that she prepared a complete speech text for each lesson and then read it to her class. In these Sunday school "sermons," Stetson began to formulate her thoughts on issues raised by scientists and other intellectuals concerning the appropriateness of traditional

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\(^1\) Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, p. 741.

\(^2\) Stetson, however, demonstrated her individuality and liberal viewpoint concerning traditional Protestant Sunday school lessons when she objected to the superintendent's request that she follow newly established guidelines for instruction. As she related to her class, "So let us resign ourselves to the present school government; as we should to the city government, or the country's. And it won't be forever you know." Charlotte Perkins Stetson, AESL MS., unpublished sermons, fol. 162.
Protestant theology in an urban-industrialized society. The sermons reflect the impact of Darwinian evolutionary theory upon conservative theology; they echo the tendency among liberal Protestants to avoid the literal interpretation of the Bible; and, they reflect a growing tendency among religious scholars and clergy to slight the Divinity of Christ.

For approximately two years Charlotte Stetson preached to her class of eleven young, religious students. During that time she gained valuable experience as a public speaker and acquired a level of confidence in her speaking ability that paid dividends for years to come. In addition, she began to formalize more precisely her liberal position on contemporary religious doctrine. Themes emerged in these lessons that became fundamental premises in later sermons, lectures, and other speeches. But the one concept that unified her thinking on religion was her faith in humanity. As she stated, "This world is progressively satisfying and we, the human race shall enjoy social immortality and happiness in it."\(^4\) In essence, she saw "heaven not as a place, but a race condition."\(^5\) This chapter examines a representative example of her Sunday school talks. The investigation details not only the


\(^4\) Quoted from Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Two Kinds of Immortality." The article was one of many clipped and saved by Gilman in her manuscript collection. AESL MS., fol. 178.

rhetorical devices and strategies she employed but also explicates the emergence of her gospel of humanity.

Background

Liberal Protestantism

Charlotte Stetson delivered most of her Sunday school sermons during the early 1880's. By then the liberal Protestant movement in America was flourishing and exerting influence upon traditional religious theology. The movement found its greatest strength in urban churches located mostly in the Northeastern section of the United States. Stetson grew up in this fertile section of religious liberalism. In fact, members of the Beecher family were in the vanguard of the movement. Henry Ward Beecher, who described himself as "a cordial Christian evolutionist," followed the example of Lyman Beecher and attempted to reconcile scientific challenges to traditional religious doctrine, especially the challenge of biological evolution.

While growing up in the New England area, Charlotte was exposed to other less than traditional forms of religious theology. Mary Perkins subscribed to the mystic-spiritualism of Swedenborgianism. Inspired by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1771), the movement enjoyed a revival of sorts in post-Civil War America. It combined

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6 Extant manuscripts are dated between the years 1883-1884. See Charlotte Perkins Stetson, AESL MS., unpublished sermons, fol. 162.

7 Hudson, p. 268.

8 Hudson, p. 270.
many themes that attracted a diverse group of religious liberals, mostly intellectuals, that included William James and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Swedenborg merged the themes of universalism, millenialism, perfectionism, and illuminism to form what he described as a set of "Heavenly Doctrines." The impact of Swedenborgianism upon religious and social issues was significant enough to have Sydney Ahlstrom conclude:

Swedeborg's visions and his communications with famous men long dead encouraged emulation, while his unusual views on sex and conjugal love provided a rationale for defying laws and social conventions on marriage. His spiritualist interpretation encouraged new views on health, healing, and sickness, and his disdain for tradition encouraged radicalism in every direction: in social and religious matters, and particularly in biblical interpretation.

When Charlotte Stetson was fourteen years old, her family moved into a "cooperative housekeeping" project organized by a group of Swedenborgians. As she recalled in her autobiography,

It was a strange group, immersed in the mystic doctrine of Correspondence, according to which everything in the Bible means something else; floating and wallowing about in endless discussion of proofless themes and theories of their own, with a sort of revelation occasionally added by Mrs. Stevens, the real leader. They would sit around the table long after meals were over, interminably talking on matters of religion and ethics.

Obviously, Stetson found little attraction in the mystic beliefs of the Swedenborgians. On the other hand, the two years she spent in the commune served to strengthen her growing tendency to rebuke religious orthodoxy and its reliance upon the literal

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9 Ahlstrom, pp. 483-484.
10 Ahlstrom, p. 485.
interpretation of the Bible, a theme she explicated in several of her Sunday school talks. As she explained to her class some seven years after leaving the commune, "I have no blind reverence for the Bible as a sacred book, every word holy; that you know, for I have laughed with you over plenty of Old Testament stories." On another occasion she recalled attending a temperance rally and commented upon the experience, "Once I went to a meeting of some earnest young temperance workers, but was not at all at home in that atmosphere of orthodox religion and strong emotion."

If ancestral lines and the home environment were not sufficient exposure to liberal-religious thought, Stetson acquainted herself with the written works of several leading liberal writers, theologians, and intellectuals. In particular, she focused her reading upon nineteenth-century Transcendentalists and Unitarians. She studied the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Margaret Fuller. In addition, she read Ten Great Religions by the Transcendentalist and Unitarian James Freeman Clarke, a work which documented the new interest in Oriental religion.

Among the many friends and relatives that Stetson visited while living in New England, two in particular strengthened even

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13 The Living, p. 61.


15 Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, p. 608.
more her contact with Unitarian theology. Stetson's favorite uncle, Edward Everett Hale, was a fervent Unitarian. As mentioned elsewhere, she enjoyed listening to Hale speak, especially his sermons. Additionally, Grace Channing, a friend and literary associate, came from an illustrious line of Unitarians which included William Ellery Channing. His church, the First Federal Street Church of Boston, was for a time the center of Unitarianism in New England.16

Charlotte Stetson's exposure to Unitarian Christianity had a significant impact upon her gospel of humanity. She incorporated into her religious messages several liberal religious concepts that were directly linked to Unitarianism. They included:

1. An opposition to emotional preaching in the vein of revivals and more emphasis upon strongly rational sermons that focused upon man's moral duties;

2. A reaffirmation of man's active part in the salvation process;

3. A belief in a benevolent God as a central force in the universe.17

Setting

Charlotte Stetson engaged in an intense period of religious activity during the 1880's that included participation in a Bible class, religious reading, and regular Sunday worship. In addition, she taught in the Sunday school program as an occasional substitute for absent teachers. She enjoyed the opportunity, and found satis-

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16 Ahlstrom, p. 398.
17 Ahlstrom, pp. 390-393.
faction working with the children in the program.\textsuperscript{18} In April of 1882, much to her delight, Stetson assumed responsibility for her own Sunday school class.\textsuperscript{19}

The setting for Stetson's Sunday school "sermons" differed little from other Sunday schools of the period. The building housed the meeting hall for regular Sabbath worship as well as classrooms for religious instruction.\textsuperscript{20} A typical Sunday morning began early with class and was then followed by regular worship, lasting usually to twelve noon. Like other Protestant churches of the time, guests were often invited to preach at the regular Sunday worship. Reverend Slicer, pastor of the church, invited prominent Unitarians to preach at his church including Dr. Hedge\textsuperscript{21} and Mr. Hale.\textsuperscript{22} Stetson's class met on the second floor of the church building.\textsuperscript{23} The room was relatively small, considering the fact that she contemplated moving her class downstairs when it

\textsuperscript{19} Journal, 30 April 1882, AESL MS., vol. 18.
\textsuperscript{20} The following description of the First (Unitarian) Church located at the corners of Benefit and Benevolent Streets in Providence, Rhode Island, appeared in a project by the Federal Writers Project: "The structure, designed by John Holden Greene, is a fine example of early 19th-century ecclesiastical architecture. Rectangular in plan, with a projecting tower and portico on the west end, a well-proportioned steeple and a great arched window over the entrance, the building has incorporated the refinements of the Early Republican period." Rhode Island: A Guide to the Smallest State, Written by Workers of the Federal Writers' Project of Works Progress Administration for the State of Rhode Island (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937), pp. 279-280.
\textsuperscript{22} Journal, 21 Aug. 1881, AESL MS., vol. 17.
\textsuperscript{23} Journal, 12 Nov. 1882, AESL MS., vol. 18.
swelled to eleven members. Stetson, however, gave no indication that the room was uncomfortably crowded either for the teacher or the students. In fact, the small room enabled Stetson to provide greater individual attention to the young scholars and to adjust more readily to their feedback while speaking to them.

The Sunday school movement in the nineteenth century was one small part of a much larger effort by Protestant denominations to promote evangelism in the city. Traditional evangelical revivalism, more prominent a force in rural America, failed to meet the particular needs of urban residents. As a result, participants in the Sunday school movement developed structured, interdenominational curricula that provided religious instruction for the urban constituency. The movement created "a pious and knowledgeable laity on a scale unequaled anywhere in Christendom."25

Efforts to standardize curricula affected Stetson's effort in the classroom. Mr. Stone, superintendent of the school program, imposed new regulations concerning topic selection for religious instruction. He insisted that all classes study from the same book: a book that focused upon Biblical stories. Reflecting her growing uneasiness with traditional Protestant reliance upon the Bible as a source of religious instruction, Stetson openly dis-

25 Ahlstrom, p. 742.
agreed with the superintendent's change. She reflected her "general dissatisfaction" with the new regulations by reading sermons to her class that dealt little with Biblical study; rather, they focused heavily upon ethical conduct. She preached, for instance, on habits, lying, courtesy, and business honesty, to name just a few.

**Audience**

Charlotte Stetson's class of young religious scholars were New Englanders living in and around Providence, Rhode Island. As citizens of Rhode Island, they carried with them a tradition of religious freedom and intellectual sophistication.

From the early days of colonization to the age of industrialization, Rhode Island stood as a symbol of religious freedom, a haven for those seeking the right to practice their faith. By 1739 the state contained thirty-three church buildings and one synagogue, representing six denominations. An urban-industrial city, Providence attracted many denominations including several Congregational churches and Unitarian assemblies.

Nearby Brown University provided the city with a community of intellectuals and a source of cultural refinement that typified

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28 For information concerning these and other sermons see Journal, 1 Jan. 1882 to 31 Dec. 1883, AESL MS., vol. 18.
the New England area. Charlotte Stetson and her friends often spent their free time attending the opera, listening to a lecture, or just leisurely browsing through books at the Athenaeum library. On Sunday mornings, Charlotte Stetson often walked to and from church with May Diman, daughter of a professor from Brown University, indicating that some university faculty attended the First (Unitarian) Church.

Although Stetson never indicated in her journals or diaries the age or grade classification of her Sunday school class, she referred to them as "boys." Her class initially consisted of eight members but climbed to eleven. The class size remained about the same during the course of her teaching duties, except for an occasional guest or absent member.

The students were mature enough intellectually to handle rather sophisticated subject material. Stetson introduced her class to such non-traditional material as the teachings of Mohammed and the works of Buddha. She challenged her class to reexamine traditional Protestant values. To that end, she enjoyed talking "promiscuously about diverse religions," despite the superintendent's edict to teach Bible stories. The class found her liberal ideas intriguing and protested when they found out about curriculum restrictions.

Charlotte Stetson, in essence, inherited a class of young, eager religious students who were growing up in an environment rich in intellectual and cultural tradition. The class presented Stetson with the perfect opportunity to test new ideas that she had on the nature of religion and its relationship to social progress.

Structural Elements

The Introduction

In his Rhetoric, Aristotle identified as principal parts of a speech the proem, statement, argument and epilogue. Each part had its own particular objectives in relation to the general end of the speech. Among other things, the introduction of a speech should arouse interest, indicate the subject or purpose, and stimulate a favorable image of the speaker. Charlotte Stetson accomplished at least two of these goals in her proem.

In her opening remarks, Stetson made an effort to arouse attention. Facing a group of young boys early on Sunday morning was surely a challenge to the young instructor. To evoke interest in her topic, she began with a reference to the previous Sunday's lesson. She indicated her intentions to continue her discussion of the "unknowable" force called God. The choice of subject, an

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36 Hereafter all citations from the sermon under study were taken from Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Belief in God and the Use of It," AESL MS., unpublished sermons, fol. 162.
unknowable and powerful force, naturally aroused the curiosity of her young audience. In addition, Unitarians were especially interested in redefining God, replacing the Calvinistic image of a wrathful God with a more benevolent one.

Stetson framed a statement of purpose that was consistent with the informative nature of the occasion. She planned to explicate "how man came first to think of any God at all." Stetson, however, came prepared to accomplish another objective, one implied rather than explicitly stated. She intended to convince her young audience that certain forces, more powerful than man, divine and natural, were at work in the universe. As a result of early study in natural philosophy, anthropology, religion, and evolution, Stetson believed that there "must be 'principles,' something to be depended on when immediate conditions did not tend to produce right conduct."37 Central to her explanation of how man came to know God was the acceptance of certain basic laws which included belief in a central force, acceptance of evolution as natural law, and adherence to the principle that every action produced a subsequent reaction.

Charlotte Stetson made little effort to establish credibility in the introduction of her speech. She relied more upon her implicit image to accomplish that end. She confirmed her expertise in previous lessons. Thorough preparation and diversity of subject matter stimulated the young minds of her students as well as enhanced their perceptions of Stetson. The students

37 The Living, p. 38.
appreciated her obvious concern for their religious instruction and respected the ideas she presented in the classroom.

The Body

In order to accomplish both her implicit and explicit goals, Stetson divided the body of her sermon into two parts. The first half of the speech set out in a quasi-scientific manner man's discovery of God. In the second half, she developed a rationale for loving and fearing that God.

Stetson structured the first half of the sermon in a historical pattern of organization, tracing primitive man's worship patterns. In doing so, she structured a unified line of thought that depended heavily upon the audience's acceptance of evolution as fact. In a transitional sentence, Stetson attempted to lead her young, impressionable audience into believing her underlying premise. She stated, "If we accept evolution as plain fact, and I think most of us do, then surely there was a time when man was too near beast to have any idea of a spiritual force." She maintained, however, that man evolved from beast to human in direct proportion to the development of his cognitive ability. The ability to think not only enabled man to survive and elevate himself above other creatures, but provided humanity with the one trait needed to perceive the existence of a supreme force.

For an explanation of the historical pattern of organization see Lester Thomssen, A. Craig Baird, and Waldo W. Braden, Speech Criticism, 2nd ed. p. 473.
Relying upon the legitimacy of evolutionary progress, Stetson moved to the next stage in her delineation of man's discovery of a god. Using a rhetorical question for transition, she asked, "Now the question is how did they [savages] come to worship anything?" Barbaric tribes, she explained, worshipped powerful and fierce forces in their immediate environment, fashioning idols that often depicted the fierce nature of the particular phenomenon. Thus, the gods of primitive tribes were a reflection of the savages' own brutal, violent existence. With that idea in mind, Stetson then suggested to her class that their image of God evolved in a similar fashion. Scientists have explained up to a point the creation of the universe, but they must always concede that some central force was responsible for the initial plan of the universe. Scientific investigation into the origins of the universe has led man to believe that a central force exists and is reasonable in nature. After all, she concluded, it was only reasonable that a rational force make its highest creation in its image.

The second half of the sermon resembled the application portion of the traditional homily. Stetson offered relevant suggestions for the proper use of man's knowing a god. As she did throughout the sermon, she used a rhetorical question for both attention and transition. She asked: "Now that we know this God, what should we do about it?" To that end, she urged her class to fear and love God. She structured her ideas in a logical pattern, the soundness of which hinged upon the acceptance of two
premises. First, man's every action, whether right or wrong, will have a subsequent consequence. As she warned her students, "There is nothing on earth that can prevent your suffering consequences." Second, through God's benevolence, the progress of evolution had rendered it possible for man to achieve perfection.

At first glance, Stetson's effort to frighten her class into fearing God resembled the fiery sermons of the Puritan preacher. The preacher tried to help his congregation in the process of conversion by emphasizing the wrathful nature of God. On the other hand, she tempered her ideas with a rational but fervent faith in the law of progress. Belief in social progress and man's role in that process were fundamental themes that she fully explored in later sermons.

The Conclusion

Stetson's closing remarks were brief and to the point. She used the final moments to restate key elements of her speech. Specifically, she warned her students that punishment naturally followed any wrongdoing and thus should be avoided at all costs. Additionally, she restated her faith in the progress of mankind and urged her students to do right whenever possible and subsequent reward would follow. Although such encouragement for proper conduct was standard fare for the typical Sunday school class, Stetson was actually attempting to establish in the minds of her students that all members of the human race were key participants in the progress

39 Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, Speech Criticism, p. 474.
of mankind. To instill such a faith in human potential, Stetson
designed a speech that effectively integrated the use of logic,
emotion and character.

Forms of Proof

Logical Proofs

Charlotte Stetson's sermon, "Belief in God and the Use of It,"
departed from the traditional evangelical homily. "New theologians"
moved away from emotional preaching in the revivalistic sense and
framed strongly rational sermons that focused upon man's moral
duties. Ethical action was equivalent to a religious experience.
Walter Rauschenbusch maintained that religion and ethics were
inseparable and that ethical conduct was the "supreme and sufficient
religious act." In addition to ethical conduct, liberal theologians attempted to accommodate traditional theology with Darwinian
evolution. They constructed a reconciliation between science and
religion that stressed the rational over the emotional.

Stetson adjusted her preaching in a similar fashion to the
exigencies of the period. She set out in this sermon and others to
convince her young students of the reasonableness of various
natural laws, especially "that things shall grow up and improve."
She attempted not only to formulate a favorable attitude toward
the social gospel and its emphasis upon progress, but also to
provide intelligent reasons for behaving in an ethical fashion.

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40 Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, p. 779.
41 Ahlstrom, p. 781.
In an effort to prove that social progress and evolution were inseparable, Stetson argued from what she viewed as an admitted proposition: evolution is fact. As such, she reasoned that man's recognition of a central force was the inevitable culmination of social evolution. Inherent in this case, of course, was belief in the existence of a supreme being. From these two enthymemes Stetson inferred conclusions concerning the positive impact of evolution on mankind's progress.

Stetson firmly believed that evolution permitted all forms of life to improve their condition. To exemplify the fact that primitive man feared the unknown, she pointed out to her class that he would "cower" during thunderstorms, shrinking at the awesome fury of lightning, thunder, wind, and rain. Yet, by implication, she was actually highlighting the positive impact of evolution upon man. Rather than cowering at many of the natural phenomenon, modern man has learned to harness them for the benefit of humanity. Using the word "cower," which denotes crouching or quivering in abject fear of something menacing or domineering, implanted into her listener's minds the concept that man naturally feared great forces. That concept became a premise for a later point in her speech.

In the course of evolution, man's cognitive ability enabled him to advance beyond the savage state. The wiser of primitive men survived and reproduced even more intelligent offspring. The process was continuous and affected individual, family, and nation. As she stated, "The individual dies of course, but the
family grows larger. The family may die out, but the nation grows. Nations die, but the world keeps on."

Charlotte Stetson also used an analogy to demonstrate further the progressive nature of evolution and to establish the premise that man's proclivity to worship was a natural phenomenon. Stetson maintained that primitive man was childlike in behavior. She explained that when a child bumped into a chair he became angry with the chair as if it were human. Savages, too, perceived things as human, and they often worshiped the very beasts they killed. Even when man refined his cognitive skills, he still worshiped a force. As she observed, "It is natural to man to worship the highest thing he can find."

Once she established the natural tendency toward adoration, Stetson then explained how man selected something or someone to worship. To that end she used three examples. Savage tribes often revered the most powerful person in their village and made him their chief. He remained such until he proved himself incapable against some force. The tribesmen then idolatrized gods, fierce and wild, that reflected the savagery of their own lives. In a similar way, the Jewish nation prayed to a god that was believed to be a "bigger and wiser" Jew and the Norwegians venerated the fierce and powerful Odin. Inferring from these examples, she stated, "All nations had one great truth, the belief in a person stronger than they." She held that the only difference between the ancient savage and modern man was in the manner of worship. "The ancient savage and the modern scientist
saw the same thing," she stated, "though the savage lowered to it right before him, and the scientist traces it back to primal forces."

Stetson's effort to explain man's natural inclination to adoration and his selection of something to worship enabled her to juxtapose two beliefs that were vital to her later rhetoric. She placed side by side in her sermon belief in God and evolution. By doing so, she offered to her class a line of thought that reasonably reconciled science and Christianity.

In a closely related argument, Stetson used the enthymeme of degree to prove the powerful nature of the force called God. Stetson argued that it was ridiculous to believe that a "blind reasonless force" could create "openeyed[sic] reasonable creatures." The creator of man must have had at least as much thought capacity as his creation. Such equality, she maintained, suggested only a "small God." The difference then between God and man's rationality was a matter of degree. As she stated, "There is a Power from which came all things. That Power is personal and greater than we. This we call God."

Stetson reasoned from another implied premise that was vital to her gospel of humanity. Specifically, she believed that the course of evolution could be affected by human action. In another sermon she said, "What is the use of being human if we must sit

42 The topic a fortiori (from degrees of more and less) states that "if a thing cannot be found where it is more likely to exist, of course you will not find it where it is less likely." The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 161.
helpless and wait for evolution to develop us?" In her view, religion was living. To know and to act were essential components of religion, more so than merely feeling and believing. She attempted to instill this perception into the minds of her students when she discussed with them the inevitableness of consequences. Adapting to her young audience, she warned them that every sin brought eventual punishment. "You can't escape. You can disobey no law, no law in all this world without suffering the consequences," she warned. Of course, Stetson hoped that her students would infer from this that right behavior produced positive results, for all of humanity. Ethical action was a key element in her social gospel. She pointed to its essential nature when she wrote:

Ethics is only to be understood as a social science. Ethics is the physics of social relation. The laws of conduct are the laws of social relation. The sum of the interaction of ethical laws, produces social forms. The family, the church, the state--these are what they are by the balance of forces in ethics.

In later speeches, Stetson used the law of consequences to argue for the social equality of woman. Women's subordinate position in society was the result of years of sexual stereotyping. In Women and Economics she argued convincingly that all roles women were permitted to play were derived from their sexual

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45 "Thoughts and Figgerings," 19 Feb. 1900, AESL MS., fol. 16.
function. A woman overdeveloped her sexuality to attract a husband. Once married, she became dependent upon man for all her needs: social, economic, and sexual. Stetson advocated that women be reinstated as active members of the economy. Such a course of action would set social evolution back upon the path of perfection.

The final point of her speech reflected Stetson's conviction that perfection was entirely possible for humanity to achieve. The spirit of optimism that motivated Stetson to spread her social evangelism stemmed from her belief in the benevolence of God. In that respect, she echoed the belief of many liberal Protestants of the period. To fear and to love God were natural reactions to His power and wisdom. That power, however, made it possible for man to execute his own destiny. Only a reasonable and powerful being could have set out such a plan. She attempted to convince her listeners that the concepts of planning and purpose were viable in an age attempting to understand recent scientific theories. As she stated,

Because his power is for good, because it is the world's law to grow up and out and on and become better and wiser and happier all the time.[sic] Through all this we can see and know that God loves us. Really and truly, this great power which rules the universe loves us. By which I mean that he desires our good and happiness; and has rendered it perfectly possible for us to be happy all the time if we will only obey those laws I mentioned.[sic]

In summary, Charlotte Stetson structured a sermon that was rational and optimistic. She argued from basic premises that reconciled in her mind science and Christianity. She made a

concerted effort in this sermon and others to establish the reasonableness of her position: a position that focused upon evolution, God, and ethical action.

**Emotional Proofs**

Charlotte Stetson skillfully integrated both logical and emotional proofs in her sermon. She fashioned her emotional appeals around three different forms. She used several devices that aroused attention and created identification between herself and the audience. Also, she employed several motive appeals to move her audience to understand and accept her premises. Finally, using an optimistic and progressive tone, she hoped to inspire her audience to ethical action.

Stetson adapted her material effectively to a young, male audience. She selected information that appealed to the adventuresome spirit of youth as well as to their proclivity for aggressive competition. Rhetorical visions of wild savages cowering for safety or the killing of beasts for food or worship aroused the curious minds of her class. Stetson excited the competitive nature of her boys by using language that amplified the combative nature of the savage. For example, her comparison of the "savage" with the "angry child" illustrated the aggressive behavior of man. The analogy was particularly relevant for her audience and perhaps rekindled memories of similar experiences in their own short lives. She frequently referred to man as a "savage," calling forth vivid connotations of fierce, cruel men competing with other savages and the environment for survival.
Similarly, she depicted the animals that contested the safety of the barbarian as "beasts," calling up visions of devilish, brutish monsters. Even the chief of a barbaric tribe used force in his position as protector of the people. As Stetson stated, "He had the chief place; was the biggest and strongest; they had to do as he said or he would kill them." Such stimulating language and provocative appeal to adventure aroused the attention and interest of the audience.

The use of such strident imagery was not inconsistent with Stetson's purpose or her effort to present a reasonable case for belief in God. Primitive man was beastly and his struggle for existence was a violent one. But the evolutionary process enabled man to ascend to a state of refinement and comfortableness, reinforcing her argument that evolution meant progress. In addition, the visions that she created in her students' minds were not merely for attention sake; rather, they helped to prove that man's recognition of a central force extended back to primal man. Modern man differed from primitive man in that the former recognized God as a reasonable and beneficent force.

Alan Monroe and Douglas Ehninger in their classic text on public speaking defined a motivation appeal as "a visualization of some desire and a method for satisfying it, or an assertion that some entity, idea, or course of action can be or ought to be linked with an impulse-to-human action--that is, a motive."47

Stetson linked her desired course of action, belief in God and the use of it, to four primary motives: fear, love, power, and reverence.

Stetson used appeals to fear and love to heighten the point that man historically feared and loved that which he perceived as strong. The juxtaposition of the dialectical terms fear and love neatly complemented the primitive-modern man dichotomy and further intensified her explanation of man's discovery and worship of God.\footnote{For an explanation of Kenneth Burke's use of the dialectic see Golden, Berquist, and Coleman, The Rhetoric of Western Thought, 2nd ed., pp. 240-241.} Primitive man feared the beasts he killed and worshiped them for their strength and power. Her illustration of the barbarian chief amplified the point. Primitive tribesmen were frequently subjected to attack by beasts and other tribes, explained Stetson. Invariably, one man would emerge from the group who seemed better equipped to meet the threat of danger. As a result, the tribe would pay homage to him, as their chief, for protection in return. They loved him because he protected them; they feared him because he threatened them. In Stetson's view, then, fear and love, though they were opposite motives, were necessary for worship.

Another motive appeal that Stetson used throughout her speech was power. The appeals to fear and power enhanced each other and unified her emotional proofs. Monroe and Ehninger suggested that the appeal to power depended for its potency upon the "sense
of aggressiveness. To that end, Stetson's numerous references to the barbarian and savage, expressed in combative terms, intensified the appeal to power. More important, however, as Monroe and Ehninger also suggested, the appeal to power implied that people with it also control objects or other people. With that in mind, she established that God possessed power and as such controlled the lives of man. Falling back upon fear appeal, she cautioned her audience that sinful behavior eventually would result in a later negative consequence. And as she summarized, "Then as we find Law[sic] to be a power from which there is no escape; and God is law: let us by all means fear God."

Charlotte Stetson evoked another motive in her speech that certainly complemented her appeals to fear and power. That motive was reverence. By its nature reverence suggests the positive emotions of admiration and respect. Optimism was an important element in Stetson's theology, and she sought to instill that feeling in her audience. Unlike the Calvinistic preachers of colonial America who spoke primarily of God's wrath, Stetson offered her young students a central force that was beneficent. She maintained that He should be admired for His grandeur and revered for His power. She created this spirit of optimism by interspersing throughout her sermon positive expressions of faith in evolution and God. When speaking of evolution she consistently emphasized that "things shall grow and improve." When describing

49 Monroe and Ehninger, p. 244.

50 Monroe and Ehninger, p. 244.
the nature of God she depicted Him as a reasonable being who cer-
tainly would deal in a reasonable manner with man. Similarly,
when discussing God's power, Stetson reassured her listeners that
He desired only their "good and happiness." Most important, God
made it possible for all men to be good and happy. To achieve
perfection, a concept only implied but nevertheless present, man
must do right. Ethical action, then, provided the means to achieve
man's perfection. In essence, ethical action restored planning
and purpose to religion.

Ethical Proofs

Charlotte Stetson's derived ethical proof was intricately
related to subject material and audience. She had little reason
to establish character during her sermon; however, the optimistic
tone and sincerity of her message intensified the probity of her
character. In speaking of God, she stressed His powerful
benevolence: a force that demanded reverence. She spoke of man's
vital part in the social-evolutionary process, emphasizing man's
own impact upon his destiny. Stetson's optimism was not artificial
nor exceedingly passionate; rather, it reflected her reasonable
faith in humanity, evolution, and God. Appropriate for a liberal
Unitarian audience, her optimistic theology strengthened the
audience's perception of her character.

Stetson proved her sagacity in several ways. In the first
half of the sermon, she unfolded a "scientific" explanation of
man's discovery and worship of God. She demonstrated a broad
acquaintance with natural history and biological evolution through
her citation of numerous examples of primitive man and his struggle to survive. In addition, the interrelated discussion of evolution and belief in God served to strengthen her intellectualism. She mirrored in many ways the thoughts and ideas of many respected intellectuals and theologians including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Edward Everett Hale as well as Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Stetson strengthened her sagacity by demonstrating common sense. To prove the reasonableness of her ideas, she used material that sustained the logic of her line of thought as well as enhanced her image. As mentioned earlier, she argued from degree to establish the sensibleness of God's personality. That argument stressed not only the rational nature of God, but also reflected the sensibility of her thinking. To admire and revere a powerful being was natural and judicious.

Stetson demonstrated good will in various ways. She attempted to identify with her audience by evoking images relevant to a young audience. Images of angry children, savages, barbarians, and beasts stimulated interest as well as moved the audience to accept evolution as natural law. To establish sincerity and truthfulness, she proceeded with the utmost of candor when she related the negative consequences of unethical action. She was, however, equally straightforward in her insistence upon right behavior. On the whole, Stetson attempted to communicate the reality of evolution, the existence of God, and
ethical action. In that sense, she was a harbinger of truth, a messenger with good tidings for humanity; as such, she ultimately contributed to the creation of good will.

Effectiveness

Charlotte Stetson prepared and delivered her sermon on God with little thought of it becoming a lasting piece of oratory to be included in a memorial volume of sermons. Instead, it was an expression of faith in certain principles that she believed in and shared with her Sunday school students. To that end she was indeed successful. However, to assess the rhetorical effectiveness of her sermon two standards of judgment may be used: audience response, and long-term social impact.

Even though Stetson had little formal training in speech composition, she nevertheless prepared a well-organized, unified text that reflected her usual thorough preparation. She developed a thesis that was appropriate for the audience and the occasion. In her speech, she delineated the process whereby man came to know and worship a central force: a theme that not only aroused the curious minds of her young audience about God but also appropriately reflected the effort of Unitarians to reexamine the nature of God as a central force. As mentioned elsewhere, she used two patterns of organization to structure the separate but related main ideas of her speech. She developed in a historical pattern man's discovery of God and arranged in a logical fashion her thoughts on ethical action. She further strengthened the
arrangement of her speech by using the rhetorical question as a transitional device, providing clarity and order to her speech. Lastly, she unified the content of her speech by juxtaposing the themes of fear and power. In describing man's discovery and adoration of a central force, she focused upon the motives of fear and power, emphasizing that both modern and savage man were moved to worship as a result of these forces. Such care in composition enhanced Stetson's communication of ideas relevant to her subject and purpose.

Charlotte Stetson communicated clearly ideas germane to liberal Protestantism in general and Unitarianism in particular, contributing to the success of her sermon. The sermon, however, was not really newsworthy in the usual sense of the word, making it difficult to assess with any degree of certainty student reaction to it. Fortunately, Stetson left some evidence behind to enable critics to infer judgments concerning the effectiveness of her Sunday school talks. In her daily journals, she frequently entered evaluative comments concerning the success or failure of a particular Sunday school sermon. She was honest in her assessment of effectiveness, distributing equally favorable and unfavorable evaluations. For instance, she reacted negatively to her sermon on city and country life, concluding afterwards that it was a "Poor sermon." 51 On another occasion she indicated that a particular sermon was "Not a successful" one. 52 On the other

52 Journal, 6 May 1883, AESL MS., vol. 18.
hand, she judged her talk on the Red Sea as "very good" and the one on Mohammed as "well received."\textsuperscript{53}

Other evidence indicated that Stetson was an effective teacher, supporting in an indirect way the positive impact of her talks. She taught for more than two years in the program. During that time the class came to enjoy her stimulating lectures. With the approach of her wedding day, she decided no longer to teach in the program. Upon hearing that news, her class did all in their power to convince her not to leave.

According to Sydney Ahlstrom, the "new theologians" of the liberal Protestant movement inspired a "new oratorical style with the task of mediating Christianity to the modern world."\textsuperscript{54} Charlotte Stetson attempted to accomplish the same goal in her sermon on God. The significance of the sermon, then, stemmed more from its contribution to the Social Gospel movement than its immediate impact upon the listeners. For their part, Social Gospel advocates were bent on influencing individuals to be the means of social change and progress. The movement was a form of social evangelism that spread a message of faith in mankind. In that respect, the early sermons of Stetson placed her in the front line of the social crusade. Janet Forsythe Fishburn in \textit{Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family} easily could have been discussing Stetson when she wrote:

\textsuperscript{53} Journal, 20 May 1883 and 3 June 1883, AESL MS., vol. 18.

\textsuperscript{54} Ahlstrom, \textit{A Religious History of the American People}, p. 738.
They (Social Gospel leaders) looked to history, society, and good men for an analogy of the nature of God. They replaced a static universe with history, society, and a race that was ascending not descending. They adopted the "old" analogical method of theology to the "new" evolutionary interpretation of history as their defense against Darwinism.

With her impending marriage to Charles Walter Stetson, Charlotte Stetson resigned her teaching position with the Sunday school in anticipation of her new duties as housewife. Unfortunately, her marriage to Charles Walter produced lengthy periods of emotional depression. At the suggestion of her confidant, Grace Channing, Stetson moved to Pasadena, California, in the hope of regaining her health. As she recalled in her autobiography,

Thirty years old. Made a wrong marriage--lots of people do. Am heavily damaged, but not dead. May live a long time. It is intellectually conceivable that I may recover strength enough to do some part of my work. I will assume this to be true, and act on it.

While in Pasadena, Stetson began to make progress on her career as a writer and speaker. She published her poem "Similar Cases," which won the praise of such a distinguished writer as William Dean Howells. She also published her short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," contributing to her growing literary reputation. As a speaker, she gained recognition as a feminist

56 Quoted by Stetson from her journal in The Living, p. 110.
57 Letter from William Dean Howells to Charlotte Perkins Stetson, 9 June 1890, AESL MS., fol. 120.
58 The Living, p. 119.
with her numerous speeches on women. In addition, she raised the eyebrows of California Nationalists with her many lectures on that movement.

59 Stetson delivered, for example, an entire series of lectures to the Woman's Club of Los Angeles on women. See AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 164.

60 Stetson delivered a series of lectures on nationalism while living in southern California. For the manuscripts of these lectures see AESL MS., unpublished lectures, folders 163 and 165.
CHAPTER IV

"Our Opportunity"

Stetson's involvement in the popular nationalist movement was important in that it initiated her career as a public lecturer, earned her a subsistence income, and enabled her to contribute in some fashion to the advancement of humanity.

This chapter examines one of many speeches that Stetson delivered on nationalism while residing in southern California. "Our Opportunity" was given for the first time on December 28, 1890, to the First Nationalist Club of Los Angeles. According to Stetson, she was going to give "a few quiet words" on nationalism; instead, she delivered an exhortative appeal for the immediate nationalization of the economy. ¹ Much like Patrick Henry's "Liberty or Death" speech, "Our Opportunity" was a revolutionary document, only the rebellion was to be peaceful. In this case, England was a capitalistic-inspired plutocracy and its taxed servants were the masses. The speech is representative of liberal activists' reactions to nineteenth-century social-economic conditions; it conveys Stetson's belief in the movement as an instrument of human perfection.

Background

The Rise of Nationalism

William O'Neill labelled the 1890's a decade of "economic crisis."² The underpinnings of this crisis were apparent contradictions between economic philosophy and reality. Ship owners and railroad owners advocated government nonintervention into business and industry; yet, those same industrialists lobbied the government for special protection. Employees were supposedly free to negotiate contracts with their employers; instead, workers were offered contracts on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Also, capitalists praised the concept of free competition while trusts and monopolies restrained it. Such paradoxical conditions were instrumental in moving Americans to initiate economic and social changes. As a result, labor organized to protect the rights of workers, farmers joined ranks to stabilize farm prices, and the Populist Party emerged with its sweeping proposals for economic reform. In addition, social reform movements arose that sought prohibition, suffrage, consumer protection, and altruism.³ It was in this context that Edward Bellamy's utopian novel Looking Backward came on to the scene. Stetson recognized the timely nature of Bellamy's novel when she said,


Edward Bellamy has not invented much. Few people do. He has put in popular form the truth of ages, and done it at a time when the whole world was aching for such help.

Bellamy's novel captured the fancy of thousands of Americans. Interested readers formed clubs throughout the country for the purpose of discussing the book and nationalism. In fact, at the height of the novel's popularity, there were one hundred and fifty-eight clubs in twenty-seven states stretching from coast to coast. The story concerns Julian West who has been transported from 1887 into the year 2000. He finds that an economic revolution has transformed the greedy and selfish world from which he came to one characterized by benevolence and brotherhood. The revolution was a peaceful one, achieved by the nationalization of industry, commerce, and labor. Nationalization created ideal working conditions for the entire population. Each person worked at a task best suited for him or her. Fewer working hours and a system of early retirement allowed individuals the opportunity to pursue special interests: social, intellectual, or artistic.

The Nationalists were the political activists of the movement. They advocated immediate civil service reform, the immediate nationalization of the telegraph, telephone, railroad system, and coal mines, and the equalization of educational opportunities for all segments of the social strata. Bellamy

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5 Hill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, p. 170.
identified the objectives of nationalism in the prospectus for his journal *The New Nation*. He wrote,

*The New Nation* will criticize the existing industrial system as radically wrong in morals and preposterous economically, and will advocate the substitution therefor [sic], as rapidly as practicable, of the plan of national industrial co-operation, aiming to bring about the economic equality of citizens, which is known as nationalism.

In California, nationalism enjoyed a modest level of popularity. At least sixty-five clubs were organized in the state. Stetson associated herself with two clubs in the southern California area. She divided her time between the Nationalist Club of Pasadena and the First Nationalist Club of Los Angeles. It was to the Pasadena group that Stetson delivered her first Nationalist lecture. The lecture, "Human Nature," was given in a vacant store to a small audience sitting on benches, chairs, or whatever they could find. Stetson was pleased with the success of the speech. She felt it was "warmly received" and was invited to speak on other occasions. From that date in mid-June of 1890 until March of 1891, Stetson wrote and delivered numerous speeches to the clubs in Pasadena and Los Angeles. Those lectures contained the essence of Stetson's interpretation of the movement and its potential to perfect humanity.

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7 Bellamy, p. 21.
8 Hill, p. 170.
9 *The Living*, p. 120.
10 *The Living*, p. 122.
Stetson structured her lectures around a number of subjects, connecting nationalism to human nature, the virtues, religion, love, and art; however, she unified those speeches by weaving through them a series of central themes. Regardless of the subject, Stetson always managed to come back to the effects of social conditioning, the struggle for existence, the accumulation of wealth, and the conscious will upon the development of humanity.

For example, in her speech on "Human Nature," she stressed that "we [the people] create conditions, and they react upon us."\(^{11}\) Capitalism and its emphasis upon competition nurtured in man the vices of cowardice, cruelty, falsehood, and selfishness.\(^{12}\) These were "artificial habits" of mankind that replaced man's natural inclination to benevolence and cooperation.\(^{13}\) "We are human, loving Christians," she asserted, "just as far as business and society allow!—no farther."\(^{14}\) However, she reiterated constantly in her lectures that such conditions need not prevail; rather, each individual through the power of conscious will could change those social conditions that were preventing the benevolent spirit of man to come forth. For Stetson, it was the

\(^{11}\) "Human Nature," AESL MS., fol. 163.

\(^{12}\) Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Nationalism and the Virtues," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 163.

\(^{13}\) Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Nationalism and Love," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 163.

\(^{14}\) "Nationalism and Love", AESL MS., fol. 163.
"blind folly of submission and helpless acceptance" of the masses of humanity, not human nature, that produced the "pitiful existence of disease and crime."\textsuperscript{15}

Stetson certainly viewed nationalism as a political movement whose instrument of change was the ballot. She recognized the expedient nature of the movement and urged her listeners to remain steadfast in their advocacy of immediate nationalization. On one occasion she indicated the difficult task that Nationalists faced in convincing people of the necessity for such change. Their greatest challenge was to convince the masses that hardship was not a good thing and that poverty was not a blessing.\textsuperscript{16}

In the final analysis, however, Stetson saw nationalism from an instrumental point of view. It was a "practical form of human development" that shared her vision of a unified and cooperative humanity.\textsuperscript{17} Stetson found nationalism attractive because it offered a means by which happiness and human love could be restored to the soul of man. According to Stetson, "The natural love of a man for his kind is the natural fruit of working together as equals."\textsuperscript{18} In a speech to fellow Nationalists, she expressed her sincere belief that nationalism would encourage the virtuous. Temperance, chastity, courage, love, and truth were

\textsuperscript{15} "Human Nature," AESL MS., fol. 163.
\textsuperscript{16} "Nationalism and the Virtues," AESL MS., fol. 163.
\textsuperscript{17} "Nationalism and Love," AESL MS., fol. 163.
\textsuperscript{18} "Nationalism and Love," AESL MS., fol. 163.
more likely to be nurtured in an environment of cooperation. She made the same point in another lecture when she remarked:

It [nationalism] does not profess to "alter human nature" at one fell swoop--but it gives human nature a chance to develope [sic] itself normally, in virtues which are as natural to the human soul as the song of birds.

Furthermore, nationalism would not only unify mankind but would encourage individual growth and development. She stated,

Alike in the common wants of a common nature, we should supply them alike. Unlike in the special qualities of body[,] brain[,] and soul-- unlike as every leaf and blade of grass is unlike--individual--free to develope [sic] on special qualities as no race nor person ever was before--then we shall draw together by real affinity--be classified by similarity in thought[,] feeling[,] and action-- not by similarity in school certificates and bank accounts!

Setting

The First Nationalist Club of Los Angeles was a well established and active organization. The club was founded in May of 1889 with approximately a dozen members. In September of that year, the small group formally adopted a constitution and set of by-laws. The members met each Sunday at 2:30 p.m. in the Temperance Temple of Los Angeles. The Temple was the scene of temperance rallies, political rallies, and women's club meetings. The Sunday afternoon agenda of the Nationalist Club usually

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19 "Nationalism and the Virtues," AESL MS., fol. 163.
20 "Nationalism and Love," AESL MS., fol. 163.
21 "Nationalism and Love," AESL MS., fol. 163. In the original manuscript, Stetson left out the commas where I have indicated with the brackets.
included regular business, adoption of political and social platforms, and invited speakers.  

A few months before Stetson's speech, the club was struggling through a period of uncertainty and dissension. Problems began in April of 1890 at the state convention in San Francisco where disagreement over a platform divided the membership. That turmoil carried over to a "convention" of clubs in the sixth congressional district. Again a platform was adopted that excited discussion and dissension in the First Nationalist Club. According to an observer, "'Sunday after Sunday [the] Temperance Temple resounded with the eloquence, logic, wit, sarcasm, and sometimes bitter emphasis, of both sides . . .'."  

As a result, membership morale and commitment to the cause waned; in fact, many ward clubs in the city disbanded. Within the confines of these circumstances, then, Stetson delivered "Our Opportunity." It explains more fully Stetson's decision to inspire a new resolve on the part of the club's membership to work for the nationalization of the economy.  

Audience  

Even though the First Nationalist Club experienced a period

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22 "News From the Clubs," The New Nation, 1, No. 3 (February 14, 1891), p. 51.  
23 "News From the Clubs," p. 51.  
24 "News From the Clubs," p. 51.  
25 "News From the Clubs," p. 51.
of dissension, its meetings were usually "well attended."

Stetson's speech to the club was no different, attracting modest audiences to the Temperance Temple. The club had an established membership that was diverse and knowledgeable. In its diversity, the membership consisted of single taxers, members of the Farmers Alliance, Populists, women's club members, and clergy; yet in variety, there was uniformity. Nationalists were united by a desire to effect social and economic change. They were drawn together by a faith in the reformist attitudes so imaginatively professed by Bellamy. To spread that faith, the club circulated a weekly folio called the Los Angeles Nationalist. Moreover, The New Nation—the official journal of the movement—provided periodic updates on the movement throughout the country as well as campaign propaganda concerning political and social reform strategies. In a similar fashion, Stetson structured "Our Opportunity" in such a way as to recall those conditions prevalent in nineteenth-century America that were preventing Nationalists from effecting lasting social and economic change.

26 "News From the Clubs," The New Nation, 1, No. 5 (February 28, 1891), p. 83.

27 "News From the Clubs," The New Nation, 1, No. 9 (March 28, 1891), p. 147.


29 "News From the Clubs," The New Nation, 1, No. 3, (February 14, 1891), p. 51
Stetson's brief opening remarks captured attention, enhanced her image, and set out in a clear fashion the major points of her speech. Her opening statement startled the audience into attention. In it she stated that there was an apparent "falling off of interest in Nationalism." Such a declaration certainly aroused the interests of the largely Nationalist audience. She then heightened her own image by stating that her commitment to nationalism was "increasing every day."

In the next sentence she previewed the main points of her speech. She said,

My hope today, is, in a few quiet words to represent to you the condition of the world, the effect of Nationalism upon that condition, and our opportunity as citizens of this day and generation to bring to pass what the world has never seen yet—a peaceful revolution.

The preview stressed an important and fundamental concept of nationalism; that is, the economic reorganization of society will be a gradual and peaceful one, distinguishing it from Marxian socialism.

Although short in length, Stetson's introduction clearly related to the audience the purpose and main points of the speech. With that accomplished, she moved to the main body of her address.

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30 Hereafter all citations from or references to "Our Opportunity" are from Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Our Opportunity," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 164.
The main body of Stetson's speech failed to meet entirely the expectations suggested by the introduction. In particular, she disregarded discussion of the effects of nationalism upon the current state of affairs and only mentioned particular steps necessary to implement the "peaceful revolution." Instead, she focused upon the problematical nature of the present economic system.

That she ignored two points established in the preview of main ideas was not inappropriate considering the audience and Stetson's view of their commitment to nationalism. Stetson and her Nationalist listeners were involved in a campaign of public policy the goal of which was to initiate a systematic nationalization of business and industry. As such, "Our Opportunity" was a deliberative speech in the classic Aristotelian sense, advocating the adoption of the proposed economic plan.\(^{31}\)

In the first place, Stetson exhorted the audience to rekindle their commitment to and work for nationalism. As she indicated in the introduction, Stetson sensed a waning in enthusiasm for the cause and sought to inspire a new resolve on the part of the listeners.\(^{32}\) To that end, she ignored the already understood and

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\(^{31}\) According to Aristotle the elements of deliberative speaking are exhortation and dissuasion; its time is the future; and, its ends are expediency or inexpediency. See *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p. 16-19.

\(^{32}\) Robert Wiebe pointed out that many Nationalists gradually moved away from nationalism and became active in the grassroots movements of populism and agrarianism, especially in the West. See Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, p. 71.
accepted principles of nationalism and emphasized instead the inherent evils of the present economic order. Secondly, Stetson spoke of the future, a time when benevolence and cooperation would replace greed and selfishness. Finally, the end of the speech was one of expediency; that is, Stetson firmly believed that immediate action was in the best interest of all mankind and was necessary to initiate the course of nationalism.

Stetson arranged the major points of her discussion of present social conditions in a causal pattern. Such a plan was appropriate for a speech that intended to amplify the inimical circumstances of a competitive economy and at the same time complemented her causal pattern of reasoning. The speech moved in an orderly fashion from a discussion of the past, to the present, and to the future.

In dealing with the past, Stetson pointed out that ancient civilizations, Rome, for example, crumbled under the forces of social conditions. Its citizens were ignorant of the causes and really had little desire to discover them. Modern man, however, educated by the events of history, has the necessary knowledge to reverse such destruction and, more importantly, has the opportunity to study and correct the social problems. "It has been heretofore a blind progress--it need be so no longer," she asserted.

She placed at the forefront of present social evils the ignominious desire to accumulate wealth, a motive detrimental to the progress of the race. That desire contributed to the
development of certain social conditions that were destroying mankind. Those circumstances included an incessant pursuit of a livelihood, the development of a class structure based upon wealth, the cultivation of dishonesty, and the corruption of government. As she stated, "To get rid of our plutocracy and its attendant poverty, we must alter the form of society—and substitute a better one!" The future of humanity, then, rested with the will of present mankind. In her conclusion, she amplified that point, exhorting her listeners to work for a better social environment.

The Conclusion

Stetson challenged the audience in her closing remarks. She placed the "fate of an era" squarely upon the will and initiative of the people. She intensified the emotional impact of the challenge by using parallel sentence construction and the analogy.

Stetson reflected her confidence in the willpower of the people when she said, "We can do it." The collective pronoun "we" stressed the necessity for a unified assault upon the plutocrats. She strengthened that point by constructing a series of parallel statements that emphasized the pronoun "we". At the same time, she outlined the necessary course of action. She said,

We can use our brains to analyze the essential evil of the existing social system, and set ourselves to study it and fight it as we study and fight other conditions which are inimical to us. We can turn principal[sic] into practice—into politics! Through our blessed government we can act as we believe as soon as we believe it earnestly enough.
She also instilled a spirit of adventure in her call to action by accentuating the novelty of the plan. She underscored that originality by the use of an analogy. The analogy alluded to the "wind and tide" of nationalism challenging the once invulnerable plutocrats. She stated,

For the first time since man lived he can be seen guiding his boat instead of rowing frantically against the stream—taking advantage of wind and tide instead of drifting helpless before them.

The analogy also suggested the timeliness of the situation. The opportunity to initiate the course of nationalism was at hand. To underscore that immediacy, Stetson ended her speech with a simple question: "Shall we take it?"

Forms of Proof

Logical Proofs

In her speech, Stetson attempted to establish a causal relationship between problematical social conditions and the competitive system of economics. Her Nationalist listeners were favorably disposed to the socialism of Bellamy and its virtues of cooperation and benevolence. However, she wanted to rejuvenate their waning faith in the movement and to convey a sense of urgency. To that end, Stetson reasoned from effect to cause, thereby enabling her to focus upon the inimical circumstances that fostered the present plutocracy.

Stetson first established two premises that were vital to the logic of her causal reasoning. They were the interacting variables
that connected the effects to the causes. She reminded her audience of the inescapable impact heredity and environment had upon the development of the individual. As she pointed out, "Your 'temperament,' your 'constitution,' your 'physique'-- you did not make these--you were born into them, and they modify your life and character for good or ill as long as you live!" Moreover, she indicated that the impact of such natural forces not only affected the individual but also the entire race. "Now what is true of the individual is true of the race--remember that," she explained.

The second premise stated that modern man has the ability to use his understanding of heredity and environment for the betterment of mankind. Lester Ward, Henry George, Edward Bellamy, and other reform Darwinists espoused in their writings that mankind could influence the forces of social evolution and lead society to a more perfect state. Bellamy actually visualized that state in Looking Backward. Stetson reminded her audience of this principle. To amplify it, she used an analogy that compared lightning, a natural phenomenon, to the natural forces of social evolution. She pointed out that for centuries man stood in ignorant awe of the destructive power of lightning. Modern man, however, has studied the phenomenon, learned from his inquiry, and now lights his streets and homes with that knowledge. In the same way, man

33 The interaction phenomenon suggests that any given event is a part of an unbroken series of causally related happenings. However, it is understood that certain forces often bring to bear more impact upon circumstances than do others within a series of happenings. Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, Speech Criticism, p. 406.
must examine the forces that have produced greed, dishonesty, and corruption, and use the knowledge gained from that investigation to eliminate those forces.

Stetson's causal reasoning depended upon the assumption that an effect cannot exist without a cause. Reform Darwinists used this premise in an effort to dissuade humanity from accepting the deterministic attitude of "the survival of the fittest." They hoped to convince mankind that there was a causal link between the conditions of society and man's actions within it. Nationalists stressed the inequities of a competitive economy. Stetson's strategy focused upon those conditions that engendered greed, dishonesty, and inequality in nineteenth-century America. Implicit in her argument was the assumption that if capitalism were replaced by nationalism, then the evil conditions of the former would be replaced by the benevolence of the latter. She stated,

We are suffering today as we did ten thousand years ago under "social conditions"; and it never occurs to us to question what these conditions are, why they are, who makes them, and how to unmake them.

Stetson maintained that the "equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" was not available to most Americans. Only a few wealthy individuals were at liberty to pursue such pleasures as art, science, and travel while the vast majority of

\[34\] Aristotle noted this assumption when he wrote: "If you prove the cause, you at once prove the effect; and conversely nothing can exist without its cause." The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 170.
the population struggled to earn a living. In defense of this point, she refuted arguments maintained by the "moralist" and "scientist."

She attacked the moralist's premises that wealth was "a snare and a burden" to mankind and poverty was "a school of all virtues." She constructed a counter premise which suggested that the elimination of wealth would end poverty, restore man to his original benevolent state, and return man's equal right to pursue happiness.  

In a similar fashion, she attacked the social Darwinist's contention that the disproportion of happiness was in accord with the natural law of the survival of the fittest and was therefore not subject to change. On the contrary, Stetson maintained that the very law of evolution implied change and scolded the scientist for ignoring that fact. She said, "And to the scientist we answer--How dare you say of all the changing conditions of humanity that this particular condition is unchangeable or final!"

As part of her causal argument, Stetson illustrated the impact of commercialism upon the business ethics of the successful merchant. She told the story of an art dealer who profited at the expense of a starving and struggling artist. According to Stetson, a young artist placed an award-winning piece for sale in the shop of a Boston art dealer. After a long time had passed, the art dealer approached the artist with news of an offer for

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35 Aristotle identified four methods of refutation. They are: (1) attack the opponent's premise; (2) adduce another premise like the opponent's premise; (3) adduce a premise contrary to the opponent's premise; and (4) adduce previous decisions. The Rhetoric of Aristotle, pp. 177-178.
his painting. The offer was for an amount of money considerably lower than the artist's asking price. However, the artist was in need of money and agreed to sell it for the lower price. As chance would have it, the artist met the buyer one day and discovered that the art dealer had actually sold the painting for a sum near the original asking price, profiting greatly from the sale. Stetson labelled the dealer an extortionist, magnifying the criminal character of the merchant. More importantly, she amplified the corrupting influence of competition upon the morality of man.

In addition to the illustration, Stetson refuted an argument advanced by moralists which defended the present economic system. Specifically, she attacked moralists who claimed that to be honest or dishonest was the choice of the individual and not inherent in any particular economic philosophy. Using the Aristotelian refutative technique of the contrary premise, she claimed that the moralist was just as immoral as the dishonest businessman by allowing conditions to exist that engendered unethical or dishonest behavior.  

Stetson completed development of her causal argument by focusing upon the theme of economic dependency. Stetson and her fellow Nationalists believed that an economy which forced one man to depend upon another for a living was unjust and immoral. She said,

If any one asks what you object to in the present system tell him that--that we depend on each other for our living! Here is where the soul of man is modified by his surroundings just as his body is!

36 The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 178.
For Nationalists the accumulation of wealth by a relatively small number left the remainder of the population to struggle for a living. In addition, the absolute power of the plutocrat reduced the working man to a mere slave, restricting his development of the virtues of independence and courage.

By reasoning from effect to cause, Stetson was able to focus upon those social conditions that she felt needed immediate attention. The pursuit of a livelihood, business dishonesty, and economic dependency were the targets of her attack. They were the natural consequences of an economic system that allowed a wealthy class to enslave the larger working class. Not until business and industry were fully nationalized would such conditions change. According to Stetson, "As long as the conditions exist the result exists--if your conditions all die of course there is no result."

Emotional Proofs

Hoping to convey a sense of urgency and to instill a sense of determination for the adoption of nationalism, Stetson used several emotional appeals that complemented her logical proofs. As part of her strategy, she identified both foe and ally to the cause of progressive economic reform. She discussed the enemies of nationalism in an intensely negative way, producing various negative emotive responses. On the other hand, she spoke of nationalism in a strongly positive way. This strategy was not uncommon among the forces of social justice. For example, Lester Ward observed,
To judge from the tone of the popular press, the country would seem to be between the devil of state interference and the deep sea of gold. The epithets, "plutocracy" and "paternalism," so freely applied, are intended to characterize the worst tendencies of the times in these two opposite directions, and are calculated to engender the bitterest feelings in the public mind.\(^\text{37}\)

Stetson excited the emotion of anger. According to Aristotle, anger is "caused by an obvious, unjustified slight with respect to the individual or his friends."\(^\text{38}\) Stetson and other Nationalists felt slighted by the unjustified concentration of wealth in the "merciless and extortionate plutocracy." Stetson strengthened her appeal by naming the most notorious and visible enemies of social welfare. She called to mind the "coal barons of Pennsylvania," the "railroad owners," and the political machine of Tammany Hall.\(^\text{39}\) In addition, she stressed the fact that these and other products of a competitive economy were preventing mankind as a whole from satisfying basic desires, intensifying her appeal to anger.\(^\text{40}\)

Happiness, liberty, and equality were unattainable for the masses; rather, each individual, enslaved by the plutocrat or corrupted by greed, toiled endlessly to make a living.


\(^{38}\) The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 93.


\(^{40}\) Aristotle indicated that the inability to satisfy a desire resulted in the emotion of anger. The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 95.
Stetson also aroused the emotion of indignation. She underscored repeatedly the undeserved prosperity of plutocrats. While they enjoyed the comfort and leisure afforded by affluence, the working class eked out a meager existence in the crowded and filthy industrial cities. Such disparity in living conditions violated the principle of justice and incited indignation in liberal reformers. Stetson exemplified this disparity by mentioning the best and worst products of the economic system. She called to mind the unfortunate circumstances that allowed in one city the opulence of Fifth Avenue and the squalor of Five Points, New York.

Moreover, Stetson elicited the emotion of shame in the audience. The appeal was particularly appropriate in view of Stetson's desire to strengthen the listeners' resolve in implementing the nationalization of the economy. She evoked a sense of disgrace in the audience by suggesting that they were no different from the slaves of Egyptian pharaohs who quietly accepted their fate.

When you contemplate the millionfold slavery of ancient Egypt, with its splendid monarchy and more splendid priesthood—you wonder why a thousand men should give way to one—live hard that he may live soft--die for his pleasure.

41 For Aristotle's discussion of indignation see The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 123.

42 For Aristotle's definition of shame, its causes, and conditions see The Rhetoric of Aristotle, pp. 112-117.
In essence, she was suggesting that it was a sign of weakness and, more importantly, cowardice to submit to rather than combat the forces of economic injustice. Furthermore, it was disgraceful for the majority of a nation whose descendents refused to pay "a paltry little tax to the British government" to "dumbly submit" and pay taxes on such items as coal, oil, and sugar. She captured the essence of her emotive appeal when she said: "And we allow these plutocrats to rule us today by common consent! It is upon us that the burden rests—and the shame!"

Ethical Proofs

From the outset of her speech Stetson focused attention upon the probity of her character by connecting her message and the cause of nationalism to the virtuous. In the proem, she praised her own steadfast commitment to nationalism and linked that cause to the noble by suggesting the benefits to be derived from the eventual "peaceful revolution."

In the main body of the speech, Stetson's strategy was to focus upon the dishonest character of the plutocrat and the ignominious conditions that sustained such a menace. It was neither praiseworthy nor noble for a major portion of a population to be enslaved by the burden of poverty and stripped of "personal liberty" by the pursuit of a living; it was equally unjust that so many paid taxes on the necessities of life and that money went to build "mahogany yachts" for the wealthy; and, it was shameful that the lives of so many depended upon the words of so few, making men virtual slaves. Moreover, the steady accumulation of fortunes
engendered the "blind and greedy individualism" that kept back civilization in business. "We are still isolated savages," she claimed, "every man's hand against his neighbor." By depicting such unfair and unworthy conditions, Stetson was able to connect by implication the virtues of justice, liberality, and magnanimity to herself and all those who actively worked for the nationalization of the economy.

Stetson proved the wisdom of her character in several ways. First, she was consistent and logical in her inferences from causal reasoning. She selected appropriate social and economic conditions prevalent in nineteenth-century America that Nationalists believed were preventing the progress of civilization. Disparity in economic opportunity, the use of wealth to corrupt government, greed, and selfishness were the natural consequences of an economic system that valued competition and professed the survival of the fittest.

Secondly, she demonstrated sagacity by selecting supporting materials that were compelling, timely, and salient to the listeners. For the women in the audience she read from Olive Schreiner's poem "The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed." By using the poem she indicated a broad familiarity with the literature of prominent feminists. Too, the poem vividly depicted the deplorable circumstances of the human race, a primary objective of Stetson's speech. Stetson described the poem this way: "It is a picture, the most vivid and hideous picture conceivable, of the way we live." For the economic reformists she made reference to labor strife in the coal fields of Pennsylvania and Southern
Illinois. And, for the social evolutionist, she recognized the impact of heredity and environment upon the human species but also adhered to the belief that human intervention could properly guide the forces of evolution.

Lastly, Stetson implicitly connected nationalism with the virtue of prudence. Aristotle defined prudence as an intellectual virtue which enabled men to lay good plans for their happiness. Throughout the speech ran the implication that nationalization of the economy was both expedient and prudent. Stetson felt that the fate of an era rested in the hands of Nationalists. Once benevolence and cooperation were restored to their rightful place in the soul of men, then the utopian world so aptly described by Bellamy was sure to follow.

In addition to character and wisdom, Stetson established good will toward her audience. In her speech she conveyed both an unyielding faith in the goodness of humanity and a staunch commitment to nationalism. By doing so, she presented herself as friend and colleague. She shared with them the same optimism that Bellamy envisioned in his novel. He wrote,

In place of the dreary hopelessness of the nineteenth century, its profound pessimism as to the future of humanity, the animating ideas of the present age is an enthusiastic conception of the opportunities of our earthly existence, and the unbounded possibilities of human nature.

In a similar way, Stetson challenged the audience to seize the opportunity now and initiate a new course of existence only fantasized by Bellamy. As she stated, "By the power of the conscious will, we, today, can stand as one against the pressure that makes us slaves, and overturn it utterly."

To create good will Stetson also accentuated those qualities of the plutocrat that excited anger, indignation, and hatred in Nationalists. Plutocracy was a devil-word that evoked visions of a small, mercenary group of individuals who exploited the working class and corrupted government officials. To heighten the impact of her appeal she compared the plutocrat to the kings of ancient civilizations who enslaved thousands of men and women for personal gratification and comfort. She stressed the viciousness of an economic system that corrupted an otherwise honest art dealer to swindle and profit from the hard work of an artist. In addition, she isolated specific culprits of the industrial world who were the targets of major reform movements. She mentioned the coal barons and railroad owners who charged what the market would bear with total disregard to fairness. By identifying a mutual enemy, she further enhanced her image of friend and associate. She displayed admiration for the cause of nationalism, approached its mission in a serious fashion, and clearly identified with the ideals held by her listeners.

Effectiveness

In one way, Stetson's speech was effective because it accomplished its purpose; that is, it renewed enthusiasm for
nationalism. "Our Opportunity" made a favorable impression upon the membership of the First Nationalist Club. Sufficiently impressed with Stetson's fervent expression of faith in the cause, they immediately invited her to give three additional presentations.\textsuperscript{44} One observer, for example, described passages from the address as "beautiful and forceable."\textsuperscript{45} The impact of the speech, however, was not limited to just the immediate audience. A local leaflet, The Porcupine, published in its "Nationalists Page" a large portion of the address, enabling Stetson's remarks to circulate among Nationalists in Los Angeles. Concerning the speech itself, the article stated: "The address . . . was in every way so masterly that it is much to be regretted that its length precludes us from publishing it entire."\textsuperscript{46}

Other evidence corroborates Stetson's favorable impact upon the membership of the club. After giving "Nationalism and the Virtues," Stetson wrote in her diary that it was "Splendidly received."\textsuperscript{47} The New Nation reported that the same lecture "was handled in an interesting manner, and her arguments in favor of nationalism made an impression."\textsuperscript{48} Also, individual Nationalists, mostly women, responded enthusiastically to the lectures. Women

\textsuperscript{44} Diary, 28 December 1890, AESL MS., vol. 29.

\textsuperscript{45} Quoted from "Nationalist Page," The Porcupine, 1, (January, 1891) See AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 3 (Oversize).

\textsuperscript{46} AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 3 (Oversize).

\textsuperscript{47} Diary, 11 January 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.

\textsuperscript{48} "News From the Clubs," The New Nation, 1, No. 2 (February 7, 1891), p. 34.
often visited Stetson at her home where Stetson would read to them her lectures. On one such occasion, after listening to a lecture, several women labelled Stetson and her ideas as "Bright!".

The speech was effective in another way: it contributed in a positive fashion to the reputation of Charlotte Stetson as a platform speaker and social reform advocate. The Nationalist Club's friendly response to Stetson's lectures opened the way for other similar engagements in the Los Angeles and the surrounding area. For example, members of the Woman's Club of Los Angeles upon listening to "Nationalism and the Virtues" invited Stetson to speak to their club. That invitation eventually translated into a series of appearances at the Temperance Temple. Additionally, Stetson received invitations from the Nationalist Club of Rosedale, California, and a local Congregational church. The most revealing piece of evidence concerning Stetson's effectiveness came from the First Nationalist Club itself. Upon learning of her decision to leave Los Angeles for San Francisco, the club proposed a benefit to honor Stetson. The motivation for such a plan, according to Stetson, was a fear on the part of club members that she would never return to Los Angeles. Perhaps members feared that Stetson's accomplishments were only the beginnings of a national career and would keep her from returning to their local club. In any event,

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Stetson was flattered by the gesture and wrote proudly of the well-wishes of her Los Angeles friends.\textsuperscript{52}

Successful lecturing and writing brought Stetson to the attention of other writers, liberals, and woman's movement advocates. Edward Bellamy, for example, published a number of Stetson's poems in The New Nation. In fact, after publishing "The Survival of the Fittest," Bellamy praised the poem in a letter to her.\textsuperscript{53} Others who read Stetson's poetry were similarly impressed. One woman in particular was so moved by a poem that she wrote Stetson for a copy to send to her son living in England.\textsuperscript{54} Edward Everett Hale acknowledged the auspicious impact of her writing and speaking when he said: "'You are getting to be a famous woman my dear'."\textsuperscript{55} Finally, area women were impressed with Stetson's contributions to the woman's movement. A reflection of that esteem came in the form of an invitation to speak at a gathering celebrating Susan B. Anthony's birthday.\textsuperscript{56} The opportunity to praise a living symbol of the movement was indicative of Stetson's favorable impact upon women in the area.

Although Stetson's stay in southern California was relatively short, it was time well invested. For she earned a living,

\textsuperscript{52} Diary, 5 March 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.

\textsuperscript{53} Letter from Edward Bellamy to Charlotte Perkins Stetson, 19 March 1891, AESL MS., fol. 137.

\textsuperscript{54} Letter from Elizabeth Fortune Peyton Carter to Charlotte Perkins Stetson, n.d. AESL MS., fol. 137.

\textsuperscript{55} Diary, 21 February 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.

\textsuperscript{56} Diary, 17 February 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
established a career, and gained recognition in the social reform community. She arrived in Pasadena, California, at an opportune time. Interest there in nationalism offered Stetson a time, a place, and a means to articulate her thoughts on reform. She was deeply committed to nationalism as an instrument of human progress. Success brought her more opportunity. As such, she was invited to address the Woman's Club of Los Angeles where she began to make public her radical thoughts on woman's proper place in nineteenth-century society.
Chapter V

"Our Place Today"

For nearly two years, Stetson lived and worked in southern California. During that time, she spoke to a number of groups on a variety of political and social issues. But it was to the membership of the Woman's Club of Los Angeles that she centered her attention upon the "sacred duties" of womanhood: wife, mother, and domestic.

Stetson believed that women's clubs were important both to the personal growth of their members and to the progress of humanity. On the significance of women's clubs she said,

In the club, for the first time in her life, she [woman] finds herself simply a human being among others united for some common purpose, and measured only by personal quality . . . We need all forces working together to this end (a place of healthy and happy peace and noble growth). And while the church is one force and the home another, this new force, the woman's club, is a large and steadily increasing help in the world's work.

This chapter examines one of several speeches that Stetson gave to the Woman's Club of Los Angeles. "Our Place Today" was

1 This statement by Stetson appeared in The Literary Digest of 1906. The article commented upon another article that appeared in the July issue of Woman's Home Companion concerning women's clubs and churches. The article in The Literary Digest is in AESL MS., Scrapbook, folders 7-8 (Oversize).
delivered on January 21, 1891, in the Temperance Temple of Los Angeles. In it Stetson voiced some radical ideas that she had on women and their status as human beings in the nineteenth century. In all she spoke four times to the club. Each speech contributed to Stetson's early lecture career and to her emergence as a feminist philosopher.

Background

Women's Clubs

The origin of the woman's club extends back to the Jacksonian period of American history. At this time, the modernization of home technology freed middle-class urban homemakers from many duties they once had to perform in the home: canning, candlemaking, and sewing clothes. Freedom from these chores was not replaced with other more meaningful endeavors, however. In order to combat boredom, some women joined literary clubs, others formed social circles, still others engaged in reform work. Working together and sharing experiences with other women filled up women's leisure time and awakened in them a sense of sisterhood.

It was not until 1868, however, that the first woman's club was founded. Mrs. Jennie Cunningham Croly, upset because women were kept from a dinner honoring Charles Dickens, established a

2 "Our Place Today," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 165.

club for women called Sorosis. The idea quickly spread with clubs forming across the country. As the number of clubs grew so too did the idea of a federation. As a result, the General Federation of Women's Clubs was established in 1890. By 1892, the federation had nearly two hundred clubs under it auspices with a membership of twenty-thousand women. 4

Women's clubs were important for several reasons. Obviously, the club was a welcome escape for women who were bored at home. Women found themselves working with other women on various philanthropic missions that included child labor reform and pure food and drugs. Such work had the added bonus of training women as public speakers and lobbyists. In addition, the clubs were interested in aiding women's self-culture; that is, women were offered the opportunity to improve themselves as mothers, wives, and homemakers. Lastly, feminists, suffragists, temperance workers, and other social reformers were attracted to women's clubs for the simple reason that so many women belonged to them. In short, social activists hoped to enlist the help of clubwomen for their respective causes. 5

Stetson addressed the Woman's Club of Los Angeles on four separate occasions in the late winter of 1891. On each occasion she focused on some particular aspect of womanhood such as wife, mother, or housekeeper. Regardless of the particular approach to the subject of womanhood, she connected the lectures by stressing

4 William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, p. 84.

5 For more detail concerning the formation and impact of women's clubs see O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave pp. 84-90.
several important themes. In each address, she challenged the paternal despotism that restricted the woman to the home and prevented her from actively working in society. She defied the Victorian value system that elevated the woman to a pious and pure house servant. In addition, she stressed the importance of the man and the woman working together as one in the duties of society. In essence, she attempted to awaken in clubwomen a realization that there was more to life than the home and to participate in that life would not only make them better humans but better wives, mothers, and homemakers.

In the two lectures that followed "Our Place Today," Stetson took aim at women's confinement to the home and society's narrow approach to child rearing. In "Social, Domestic, and Human Life," she likened women's subservience to home and domestic duties to that of slavery. Bold in her approach, she claimed that man was a mere despot who enslaved woman to serve and care for his kingdom—the home. In fact, she stated that man was still living in some forgotten era of despotism and not in an enlightened republic. She pointed out the value of having men and women share in the work of humanity as equal partners. Under such circumstances, the debilitating effect of excessive sexual distinction would slowly disappear. According to Stetson, the "eternal feminine" would no longer perpetuate the "eternal masculine."


7 "Social, Domestic, and Human Life," AESL MS., fol. 165.
In addition, Stetson called upon her listeners to take the initiative and make the requisite changes in order to restore social progress. She said, "We have got to do things which are new and strange and not altogether pleasant for the sake of what is to come after." Within this context, she proposed her radical plan of cooperative apartment complexes. She stressed, however, that such a plan was not intended to replace monogamous marriage with communal living; rather, it would more efficiently and equitably distribute various family and domestic duties to those most suitable for the particular jobs. After all, she asserted, there was no necessary connection between monogamous marriage, home, and family and washing dishes.

In a similar fashion, Stetson outlined her plan for collective child care in "Who Owns the Children?" She expressed the belief that cooperative child rearing was an orderly, united, and well-balanced approach to the care of children. She maintained that the narrow confines of the single-family home had distorted the proper development of a child's mind, body, and soul. The single-family child was ostensibly a selfish one. Isolated from other children in other homes, the child grew up unaware that other people have needs, desires or rights. On the other hand, cooperative child care would allow children to interact with their peers; it would enable mothers to help each other in the care of children; and, it would offer a plan of day

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8 "Social, Domestic, and Human Life," AESL MS., fol. 165.

9 Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Who Owns the Children?" AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 165.
care for those mothers who worked but could not afford child care. In the final analysis, Stetson argued that the collective love and intelligence of cooperative child care would restore cooperation and benevolence to the fabric of American society.

Setting

The Woman's Club of Los Angeles was one of many such clubs that organized around the country in the second half of the nineteenth century. As part of their mission, the clubs tried to educate women on a variety of subjects concerning women and to provide meaningful cultural enrichment. In her lectures, Stetson discussed some thoughts she had on women and their traditional roles.

She lectured to the club on Wednesday afternoons at 3:00 p.m. in the Temperance Temple of Los Angeles. She was not a newcomer to the speaker's platform of the Temple. Only a few weeks early she had addressed the Nationalist Club there on "Nationalism and the Virtues." Stetson so impressed some members of the woman's club in the audience that they invited her to address their group.

Other groups in the Los Angeles area used the Temple for a meeting place. The First Nationalist Club met regularly there in an effort to spread the utopian dream of its founder. In addition, the local Women's Suffrage Association used the facility. For instance, the group invited Stetson to speak at a celebration at the Temple honoring the birthday of Susan B.

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Anthony. In essence, the Temperance Temple was a gathering place for a diverse number of reform groups that attracted the interest of women. In this respect, the Temple was symbolic of the many splinter groups that comprised the woman's movement of the late nineteenth century.

Audience

Clubwomen across the country shared with each other several demographic characteristics. In general, they were white Anglo-Saxon women who were living in and around large urban areas. They were middle-aged women, usually married, and homemakers—ideal Victorian women. In addition, clubwomen were from the middle class with sufficient financial means to purchase the latest home appliances or possibly employ servants. Consequently, they were women of leisure fighting boredom and inactivity.

Members of women's clubs tended to be conservative; that is, they were more inclined to stay within the strictures of the code of true womanhood and to work on reform measures that related to typical female concerns. For instance, clubwomen campaigned for protectionist laws to upgrade working conditions for women; they lobbied for legislation to restrict child labor; and they worked to clean up tenement houses in the cities. These and other reform


12 Information concerning the typical clubwoman was taken from O'Neill, Everyone was Brave, pp. 84-90.
measures like them were just extensions of women's roles as housekeepers and mothers.  

Stetson was aware of the conservative nature of clubwomen. For example, in "Social, Domestic, and Human Life," she anticipated possible negative reactions to her radical thoughts on womanhood. She said,

Now those most conscientious and most conservative are squirming in their seats I know, with desire to explain that our place in life [is] to care for the home and family and add a general lustre to Society[sic].

Similarly, she expected some adverse reaction by conservative women to her plan of cooperative child care outlined in "Who Owns the Children?" Early in the lecture, she warned the listeners that her thoughts on child care might "hurt" or "offend" some of them. Regardless of the conservative nature of the audience, Stetson developed her new thoughts on women in her lectures to the Woman's Club of Los Angeles. In "Our Place Today," she structured her remarks in such a way as to focus upon the family of humanity and women's part in the progress of society.

Structural Elements

The Introduction

In the proem to "Our Place Today" Stetson centered attention upon the subject, clearly stated the thesis, and previewed the
main points of the speech. She opened the speech with an intriguing and challenging request. "To begin with," she said, "I want you to count your mothers backward." The request drew attention to and interest in the subject of motherhood. She followed the request with a statement that implicitly praised women for their vital contributions to the development of humanity. She stated, "All the way back, down lines of ages unnumbered and unknown, there was always a mother and a child." In addition, since Stetson was a mother, the choice of subject established a commonality between her and the audience.

Before stating her thesis, Stetson took a few moments to prepare her audience for it by demonstrating the unique partnership shared by women in the "human family." She pointed out that down through the ages, from primitive to modern society, women were united in their capacity as mothers. Referring to women she said, "And they were all mothers, who nursed their babies and loved them, when they were soft furry things, just as much as they love theirs now in flannel and Hamburg edging."
The contrasting images of the primitive and modern child contributed to the interest generated by the proem; more importantly, they established evolution and heredity as laws of the universe, subjects vital to the logicality of the remainder of the speech. With that Stetson stated her thesis:

16 Hereafter all citations from or references to this speech are from Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Our Place Today," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 165.
I want you to feel the continuity of race, the oneness of the human family, the connection between all those before your mothers many times removed; and all those around you today—cousins many times removed—all the same family.

As a transitional device, Stetson outlined for her listeners the main points of her speech. She stated each point in the form of a question. As such, she focused her listeners' thoughts on the content of the speech and further aroused interest in it. She asked,

Now what is our family history? And what is our share in its praise or blame? What place has been given us heretofore, and what place may we take for ourselves today?

The Body

Stetson's preview of main ideas set forth in a straightforward fashion the major points of "Our Place Today." Four in number, the major points followed a distributive pattern of development; that is, matters having a common thought center and an obvious connection among themselves were grouped in separate units. In this case, the common thought center was the metaphor of family—the family of humanity.

The major ideas were appropriate in respect to Stetson's intentions to establish the oneness of women in the human family. Always important to her gospel of humanity, Stetson first discussed at great length humanity as a living, growing organism affected by the laws of evolution and organic function. According to Stetson,

17 Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, Speech Criticism, p. 473.
The human race makes things and uses them and it is by making and using that we have grown from the "hairy savage in his hollow tree" to this era where we play with steam and lightning and build the Eiffel Tower and the Brooklyn Bridge.

In the second point, she narrowed the focus of the speech to that of woman and her share of the "shame" in the derailed progress of the human family. Specifically, she distinguished between race function and sex function, stressing that woman had unfortunately allowed the "sacred duties" of true womanhood to interfere with her functions as a human being. In a succinct yet sardonic fashion, she drove this point home when she observed,

When the soul stands before God it is not judged as a male soul or a female soul, just as a human soul, and I doubt much if any feminine weakness will excuse then for failing in our share of the world's work.

In the third point, Stetson narrowed further her focus upon woman. In it she considered those "sacred duties" assigned to the female by the "man-made world" and the absolute unpreparedness of the woman for the responsibilities of wife, mother, and homemaker. With a note of skepticism she asked, "Do you expect every young man to start in alone in business, a business he has never given thought to before...?" She stated the lesson of her thought: "It is time we learned the one great secret of all human improvement--working together."

The final point of her speech concerned woman's proper place in the family of man. Stetson felt that woman's place was at man's side, but not as wife, mother, or domestic; instead, woman should become an independent, conscious citizen, working together with man for the betterment of humanity. Taken in this light, Stetson's speech was a call to action.
To prepare the audience for her appeal to action, she ordered the main points in a deductive method. She established as fact the broad concepts of biological evolution and organic function as they related to the human species. Each point thereafter focused upon more narrowly defined thoughts concerning woman's convoluted role in nineteenth-century America. Her purpose, then, was to prove that woman, as an equal part of humanity, was inextricably connected to the growth of the race. Thus, her decision to develop in greater detail her thoughts on evolution, the law of action, and their impact upon human growth was appropriate and necessary for the success of the speech.

The Conclusion

In the conclusion, Stetson conveyed hope and confidence in the future of humanity. As she told her listeners, "And we have come to life in an era more rich in possibility—more fraught with danger—more big with hope—than any the struggling world has ever seen." Stetson hoped such optimism would inspire the listeners to commit themselves to the cause of human progress. No longer must man face alone the duties and responsibilities outside of the home. To amplify this point, she compared women to a "reserve force" in the army of humanity. In an effort to leave men with a favorable impression of her, Stetson praised them for their valiant efforts. "Man has done the best he could alone," she said, "but look at the result today!" Thus, Stetson suggested that it was unfair to blame men solely for increases in crime, disease, and governmental corruption. Consequently, she challenged women to stand at the
side of men and to pursue the world's work as humans first and
females second. She said,

By the side of man where God placed us--doing the work of
the world of which we are half--mothers who can raise live
children and strong ones--wives who can hold love forever
because he stays of choice--women who can stand alone there-
fore can help man and help each other--in the forefront of
race which has no sovereign save its God--this is Our Place
Today!

Forms of Proof

Logical Proofs

From the standpoint of organization, the speech appeared
informative in its general end; however, Stetson constructed a
well-defined line of argument within the major points of her
speech that was intended to convince women to take their rightful
places in the family of humanity. Central to the argument was the
contention that humanity was to function as one in the work of
society. In order to prove that contention, Stetson developed a
chain of enthymemes that demonstrated the relationship that
existed between the whole of humanity and its parts, man and
woman. In essence, Stetson employed the Aristotelian topos of the
parts to the whole. Only in this case she established first the
nature of the whole; that is, that the parts of humanity, man and
woman, were to work together as a unified entity. Unfortunately,
woman's limited capacity as wife, mother, and domestic removed her
from active work in society itself, thereby affecting the well-being
of the other parts and ultimately the whole of humanity.

18 The Rhetoric of Aristotle, pp. 156-166.
Reflecting the liberal Christian reconciliation of the Biblical creation and evolution, Stetson's first enthymeme set forth evolution and organic function as laws of the universe created by God to govern it. According to Stetson,

Slowly the Divine Spirit manifested itself through matter; constantly forming and reforming the organisms through which it chose to speak; and ever casting aside and leaving behind the lower forms—proven imperfect—and rising into higher and nobler shapes until man stood erect and spoke at last.

As exemplified by the human form of Christ, Stetson argued further that God's highest creation was man. As such, man was superior in body, brain, and soul to other creatures and had the power to create. "He [God] has made it law," she asserted, "that organic development shall depend on use."

That function develops organ was an enthymeme that Stetson used frequently in her lectures and sermons. In fact, it was prevalent even in her early Sunday school lessons. Furthermore, it was central to the proposition that all life forms evolved from earlier types. In this speech, the enthymeme was vital to Stetson's argument that humanity must work in a united fashion for the progress of the race. She contended that each human being was comprised of three separate parts: the soul, the brain, and the body. Although together they constituted the whole being, they could still function separately. To exemplify this, she pointed out that a man without legs may learn to walk on his hands or a person with a weak mind may have a great soul. She asserted, however, that "it does not follow that such development is desirable." The highest creature of God's creation was intended to grow in perfect proportion. She stated, "Even development of
body and soul and brain is the human idea; rising from age to age, but rising in unison." As an extension of this line of thought, it was only logical to argue that any distortion of the parts of race, male or female, would subsequently affect the entire race.

Stetson's next enthymeme focused upon the source of disruption that had slowed the progress of mankind. She contended that woman's sexual functions had interfered with her racial functions. To illustrate the point, she compared the lion with the human. She stated that the lioness was a lion first and female second. In her capacity as a lion, she shared with the male the responsibilities for survival. She fought and hunted at the lion's side and fulfilled her duties as mate and mother. However, suppose that the lioness always stayed at home while the lion "prowled and hunted"; he was brave and she was incapable of defending herself. Stetson maintained that such a condition would eventually lead to the overdevelopment of sexual functions. She said,

Nature would get along with it somehow of course. She would develop [sic] the lion in his capacity, and the lioness in her incapacity and before long we should have each of them bragging their "masculinity" and "femininity."

Obviously, Stetson was taking aim at the well-defined codes of manhood and womanhood that were prevalent in nineteenth-century America. For man a world existed outside the home that permitted him to pursue economic, social, and political interests. For woman the world was the home. Furthermore, she was regulated by a code of conduct that held that the ideal woman was pious, virtuous, domestic, and submissive. It was the "cult of true womanhood"
that Stetson was attacking in her speech. The words masculinity and femininity stressed Stetson's conception that sexual functions had taken precedence over human functions. She raised doubts in the minds of her listeners concerning woman's limited role in a series of rhetorical questions.

Now are you sure that a life of domestic service is a woman's whole duty in life? Are you sure that you are the best wives by having no work and no interest beyond your own four walls—and your neighbors? Are you sure you are the best mothers by each of you consecrating twenty years to the care of your own children whether you are fitted for that care or not?

The incredulous tone of these questions prepared the audience for the next line of argument which asserted that woman had failed in her "sacred duties." The logicality of the argument was based upon the enthymeme that any distortion of a part affected the whole. In essence, she argued that if wife, homemaker, and motherhood were woman's human work, then why has she not performed them in a satisfactory way? She used a number of examples that supported her position. She pointed to the high infant mortality rate as one instance of woman's failure in her life's duty. She suggested that women were not transmitting to their offspring the highest level of intelligence since women were restricted in their own intellectual development. "It stands to reason," she argued, "that you get a wiser child from a wise man and wise woman than from a wise man and a fool." Also, Stetson noted the absurdity of women's lack of preparation for their most important duty in life—marriage. She

19 For additional information concerning the cult of true womanhood see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," American Quarterly, XVIII (Summer 1966), pp. 151-174.
observed that "a woman goes to the very gates of marriage--yes, and becomes a mother in direct reality, without ever giving one hour to the study of her business."

After Stetson detailed the anomalous nature of woman as wife, mother, and domestic, she offered the logical conclusion to her line of argument. Consistent with her premise that parts affect the whole, she inferred that woman must assume her proper place in humanity; that is, she must work along with man in political, economic, and social affairs. Only then will the parts of race, man and woman, be equal; and only then will humanity prosper as one. According to Stetson,

After God had made the human race in his own image, male and female, then God blessed them, and God said unto them "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it." They were to subdue it, and to have dominion over it--they, not he.

Emotional Proofs

In "Our Place Today," Stetson intended to make the largely female audience feel uncomfortable in their sex-based roles and ultimately to convince them to take their rightful places as full citizens. She relied primarily upon the emotion of shame to induce such action. She focused upon women's apparent failures in their capacities as mothers, wives, and domestics. These shortcomings were a discredit not only to their sex but to the entire race as well. Stetson believed that the race as a whole could no longer use ignorance as an excuse to explain "its glory and its shame." As she told her listeners,
Because we did not know our shame let it be forgiven us!

Because our brothers did not know it either let it be forgiven them!

But now that we know it and they know it let neither be forgiven if the shame endure.

In an effort to arouse the feeling of shame, Stetson visualized the absurdity in limiting women to mere sexual functions. She asked the audience to imagine a world where women were nonexistent and men were made reproductive of their kind. In this state, Stetson maintained that the human race would continue to exist because men would still produce the artists, technicians, scientists and other skilled craftsmen who were essential to the growth of a race. On the other hand, she asked the audience to imagine a world where men were nonexistent and women were made reproductive of their kind. In this case, the human race would consist of "female animals with angelic emotions" but "incapable of self-maintenance or self-defense."

In his discussion of emotion, Aristotle wrote that "it is a cause of shame not to have any part in the honorable things in which all men . . . participate." For Stetson it was shameful that women were kept from active participation in the intellectual, political, and economic aspects of society. To her way of thinking, these were the "honorable things" that men and women should share alike. In an effort to reinforce her appeal to shame, she pointed out that even lesser species in the animal kingdom, the genus

20 The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 113.
feline for example, knew better than man that race function was more important to survival than mere sexual duties. As such the lion and lioness worked as one in order to secure their safety and comfort as well as the continuation of the species.

Throughout the speech, Stetson flayed at the nonsensical image of woman in nineteenth-century America. While doing so she also heightened her appeal to shame by exposing the paradox of the ideal and real woman. Whenever Stetson referred to woman's sex-based roles she described them as "sacred duties" or "holy and wonderful duties." Such descriptive phrases were not meant to be laudatory; rather, they were satiric in nature, jeering at the cult of true womanhood. In sharp contrast to the ideal woman, Stetson depicted instead the real woman as a helpless, ignorant, untrained, and dependant creature. For Stetson it was shameful that woman was taught her "sacred duties" by "the hoarded gossip of a hundred grandmothers, but no individual intelligence"; moreover, it was shameful that woman was so dependent upon the male for her safety and livelihood. According to Stetson, "As independent human beings, members of the state, integers, citizens, so only can we be real wives, real mothers to a race of men." She described woman's status as a "senseless waste." She exemplified that waste and the shame that went along with it when she said:

It is considered "indelicate" to bring a young girl up with a knowledge and expectation of her coming duties. But if she is not trained when she is a girl-- when is she to be trained? After marriage? After maternity? That is the way we learn. By experience. By deadly and bitter experience. By the sickness and death of our darlings! We learn in time--you know they say "you have to raise
one family to learn how"--we learn by practice--by
practicing on our children--and by the time old women
have learned their lessons half their children are dead!

In addition to shame, Stetson appealed to the sentiment of
indignation. Aristotle noted that the feeling of indignation was
the nearest antithesis to pity. She did not intend for the
predominantly female audience to wallow in self-pity over the
inequities of woman's prescribed roles; instead, she sought to
instill both a desire and determination on their part to rectify
those injustices. In her speech, Stetson makes it clear that man
and his "man-made world" had stripped woman of human pursuits in
favor of sex-related functions. Highlighting those functions she
asked, "Did you ever see a woman yet who was cook, housemaid,
nurse, seamstress, and housekeeper, and yet had time to do
anything else?" Furthermore, it was mere fabrication that the
female was to serve the family and that to enter the real human
life would militate against her functional duties. She stated,

It is written in every line and stone and fabric to this
man-made world! It is told [to] you down all the
centuries by men's voices! It is still universally
believed.

But it is a lie!

Stetson's arousal of indignation complemented her appeal to
shame. By evoking feelings of shame, she compelled women in the
audience to recognize their inferiority and failure in their
ascribed roles. On the other hand, Stetson established a sense of
camaraderie and self-worth by arousing indignation. The
resentment and anger that naturally follows indignation developed

21 The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 123.
in women a unified commitment to improve their condition and with
that came a sense of achievement and self-respect.

In a way, Stetson's use of emotions evoked a religious experience
in her women auditors. She awakened in women feelings of shame
and guilt and then evoked a sense of assurance in women's
self-worth and hope for the future. 22

Ethical Proofs

In her logical and emotional appeals, Stetson lashed out at
the injustice of woman's subordinate existence as mere mother,
wife, and domestic. On the other hand, she also felt such roles
were inherently noble. 23 It appears inconsistent that Stetson
would amplify the grandeur of motherhood while at the same time
flail away at it. But it was not marriage, homemaking, or
motherhood that she was attacking in this speech; rather, it was
woman's restriction to only these functions at the expense of her
other human ones. In "Our Place Today," Stetson attempted to
fashion a favorable impression of her character by connecting her
message on womanhood to the noble and virtuous.

22 The information concerning emotions and motivation was
taken from Winston L. Brembeck and William S. Howell, Persuasion:
A Means of Social Influence, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,

23 Several years later Stetson aligned herself with Lester
Ward's gynaecocentric theory that essentially placed women as the
dominant sex of the race. Stetson discusses the impact of Ward
and his theory upon her in The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman,
p. 187, and for more information concerning Ward's theory see
266-275.
In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defined the noble as "that which is desirable in and of itself and also wins praise; or is that which is good, and also pleasant because good." In this respect, Stetson linked motherhood and its related duties of wife and domestic to the virtues of magnanimity and magnificence. In the introduction, she evoked a sense of dignity in the shared experience of motherhood that connected mothers of all generations. Elsewhere in the speech she also accented the grandeur of woman in the family of humanity. She exalted motherhood as the "sublimest" responsibility of adult women, holding the fate of nations in their hands. That responsibility was not only "magnificent," felt Stetson, but was also "awful in its importance."

Stetson established the probity of her character by demonstrating sincerity and courage. She was not hesitant in laying blame for the condition of humanity. She maintained that men were partly to blame for women's subordinate position in society; however, women were also answerable for "half the shame and sin." By mentioning such circumstances as infant mortality, poor preparation for marriage and motherhood, and prostitution, and by suggesting to a female audience that they were partly at fault for those conditions, Stetson certainly displayed courage. In addition, such candor on the part of the speaker demonstrated a genuine desire to improve the progress of humanity. In fact, her decision to stress women's part in their own subjugation may have backfired had she not conveyed such a keen and optimistic faith in mankind.

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24 *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p. 46.
She also invested her message with integrity by interspersing throughout the speech numerous maxims. According to Aristotle,

A Maxim is a statement; not about a particular fact . . . but a general nature; yet not a general statement concerning any and every sort of thing . . . but a statement about those things which concern human action, about what is to be chosen or avoided in human conduct.25

In addition to the message, Aristotle noted that sound maxims invest the speaker with moral character.26 Throughout her speech, Stetson made general statements about human nature. They were often extracted from the scientific principles of evolution and heredity or just common sense observation. In either case, the maxims instilled in the message the qualities of worthiness and truthfulness. And judging from the audience's positive reaction, they attributed to Stetson the same qualities.27

A representative sample of the many maxims in "Our Place Today" is provided below. These maxims are concerned with Stetson's belief that the brain, body, and soul must be equally developed not only in man but woman as well.

You know a devoted mother, if she be also a fool, is not as sage a person to bring up children as one with less devotion and more sense!

To be equal does not mean to be alike you know. A perfectly developed woman is the equal of a perfectly developed man, though different.

The first duty of a mother is to be a mother worth having.

It stands to reason that you get a wiser child from a wise man and wise woman than from a wise man and a fool.

27 Stetson describes the audience's reaction in her Diary, 21 January 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
By using such maxims, Stetson proved her sagacity as well. They demonstrated her insight into the problematical conditions affecting the progress of humanity and her ability to infer reasonable, common sense conclusions from her observations. She also showed wisdom by drawing supporting materials from a diversity of sources which included biology, religion, and art. As she did in most of her speeches, Stetson communicated her broad familiarity with the reform Darwinist interpretation of evolution and its application to the study of society. As such, she established a logical connection between evolution and woman's status in nineteenth-century society, illustrating the gradual subservience of woman to her sexual functions. In addition, she revealed a firm grasp of the liberal Christian view of creation and its relationship to the Biblical story of creation. Commenting on the Bible, she said,

It is not from such primitive Oriental [sic] views that we can learn to see the wisdom and wonder of the slow upbuilding of the world--the ages of whirling fire, of boiling waters, of deep slow-moving ice; the rising and sinking of the continents; the huge convulsions of the unquiet earth; the temporary pauses of warmth and stillness in which came--life [sic].

She did not, however, limit herself to Christianity when finding materials to support her position on women. For example, she quoted from the Koran in order to strengthen her point on the universal subjugation of woman by man. She said,

Do you know what the Koran says of women? "The wife is thy tillage." We have been the soil from which men grew. The women-children that we raised were simply more soil to raise more men--we were the world-producers--men the world!
Finally, she exemplified her diversity of knowledge and background by mentioning the Western artist George Catlin. According to Stetson, Catlin found little evidence of high infant mortality among the primitive Indian tribes of North America. In contrast, Stetson cited the high infant death rate in modern society, amplifying the absurdity of such a condition.

Stetson's primary goal in "Our Place Today" was to awaken in her female listeners a general dissatisfaction with the true womanhood fantasy and its stereotypical roles. To that end, she detailed for the audience woman's dismal performance in her so-called sacred duties; still, she tried to establish good will with her listeners.

She identified with her listeners as a woman first and then as a mother, wife, and homemaker. Throughout the speech she stressed that women and men were equal partners in the human race. As such, they should share equally in all aspects of human work and assume equal responsibility with men for the progress of society. In essence, she elevated the status of women, uniting them in a sense of camaraderie and fellowship as women, not females.

Stetson also identified with her listeners' desire to improve themselves as mothers, wives, and homemakers. She established rapport by recognizing the frustration, pain, and sacrifice that women endured in their restricted world of the home. "You get tired and dirty and cross in doing housework," she observed, "does that add to the attraction of a wife?" In another instance she
said, "It is not to be denied that we mothers have laid our lives down on the altar of maternity both literally and metaphorically through all time."

Lastly, Stetson created good will by approaching the unjust conditions of woman's present status in a straightforward fashion. She made it clear that women were partly responsible for their plight and therefore partly responsible for the change. In doing so, Stetson presented herself as a woman who had a difficult and painful message, one that she felt was vital to the welfare of humanity. She expressed a keen faith in the justice of mankind, a genuine desire to improve society, and the courage to confront openly the problematical conditions of society. These qualities contributed both to the creation of good will and to her overall image.

Effectiveness

From Stetson's vantage point the speech was a "great success." Women responded favorably to her painful but honest assessment of women in the nineteenth century. In fact, she was somewhat surprised at the overt expressions of emotion by the listeners. In her diary she wrote, "Some of the women cried and they actually clapped at times!" Such astonishment stemmed from an observation that she made about audiences in the Los Angeles area. In general, she felt that audiences there were reserved,

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almost stoic, in their visible reactions to a speaker and his message.\(^{30}\) It was understandable, then, that Stetson responded as she did to the crying and clapping of her audience. More importantly, these overt displays of sentiment suggest that Stetson effectively aroused the emotion of shame and that she successfully established a sense of self-worth in women. In a sense, the shedding of a tear was an emotional cleansing of woman's suppressed desires to live a life outside of the home, and the clapping was a symbolic gesture of reaffirmation in the dignity of womanhood.

Stetson also was effective in moving her audience to action. At the completion of her speech, women began to organize and make plans for the task of securing full citizenship. Such a display of commitment was also indicative of Stetson's success in arousing camaraderie and self-worth. According to Stetson, the women went about their business showing "lots of enthusiasm."\(^{31}\)

Other evidence indicates that members of the Woman's Club were favorably impressed with Stetson and her speeches. Following "Our Place Today," she was invited to deliver additional lectures to the club. For example, she read twice her lecture on "Who Owns the Children?" On the first occasion, she spoke to a handful of women and two men. Stetson wrote that the lecture was "Very well received."\(^{32}\) A few weeks later she gave the lecture again. This

\(^{30}\) Diary, 18 January 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.


\(^{32}\) Diary, 18 February 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
time, however, the audience "was quite large, and much interest was manifested."³³

Stetson's speeches to the Woman's Club of Los Angeles were effective in ways other than immediate audience response. In particular, the lectures earned her a living, provided a forum for her thoughts, and offered her meaningful work. Stetson viewed her lecturing as honest work which also satisfied her desire to contribute in some significant way to the progress of humanity. Although she made only $6.20 for "Our Place Today," she was satisfied just to have had the opportunity to earn it. She reflected as much in her diary, "And money more fairly earned I never saw--free gift for well appreciated honest work. It does me good."³⁴

Stetson looked upon her entire stay in southern California as a "valuable asset" both to her economic survival and to the development of her career.³⁵ She earned a meager income from the lectures; yet, they gave her a sense of accomplishment, a sense of mission that was measurably more significant than any money. In her words, "But it was free expression of a growing philosophy, and a power of delivery which increases with it."³⁶

While living and working in Pasadena, Stetson's reputation traveled up the California coast to the San Francisco Bay area.

³³ "News From the Clubs," The New Nation, I No. 9 (28 March 1891), p. 147.
³⁵ The Living, p. 131.
³⁶ The Living, p. 131.
Mrs. Emily Parkhurst, who was organizing the Pacific Coast Women's Press Association (PCWPA) at the time, heard of Stetson's success to the south and invited her to San Francisco to read a paper at the upcoming PCWPA convention. Stetson accepted the invitation and journeyed to northern California. Nationalists, clubwomen, and other social activists regretted to see Stetson leave southern California. As one reporter put it,

Pasadenians may well regret the departing of so brilliant and shining a light from her[sic] literary and social circles, and will sensibly miss the strong and uplifting influence of so gifted and noble a woman.

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37 The Living, p. 130.

38 From a newsclipping in AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 286.
Chapter VI

"Our Social Duties"

Stetson's debut at the PCWPA convention was successful and met with praise. One report described her paper to the convention as "the finest paper delivered at the Press Association in San Francisco." With such an auspicious introduction to the Bay area, she settled in and began to search for ways not only to continue her success as a speaker but to earn a living as well. Consequently, she undertook the task of lecturing to small groups of women on domestic sociology. She organized a number of classes and prepared weekly talks on subjects relevant to women: for example, domestic duties, maternal duties, social duties, and marriage. Yet the lectures were more than just informative talks about womanhood; they were exhortative messages, urging immediate change in the economic and social habits of nineteenth-century America. Furthermore, they were early rumblings of a movement that soon would capture the fancy of many progressives. This chapter examines the fifth lecture of the series entitled "Our

1 Quoted from an unidentified newsclipping in AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 286.
Social Duties. Stetson delivered it for the first time on November 24, 1891 to a group of San Francisco women.

Background

Efficiency and Scientific Management

Progressivism was a dynamic and diverse movement which exerted significant influence upon the social, political, and economic character of America. From 1890 to 1920, progressives campaigned to regulate corporations, to clean up corrupt municipal governments, to gain protective legislation for women and children, and to secure many social reforms. In addition, there emerged at this time considerable interest in the scientific management and efficiency movements.

Frederick W. Taylor popularized the scientific management movement. It had as its chief aim to develop a completely integrated and scientific system of industrial organization that would transform the management and operation of a factory into a highly efficient machine. In his program of industrial management, Taylor stressed the need for division of labor, planning departments, and a piece rate system of wages. As a result, time-motion studies, job specialization, and assembly lines became the order of the day in progressive America.  

2 Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Our Social Duties," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 166.

The movement, however, was not limited to industrial management. The concept also captured the fancy of social reformers. For instance, feminists applied scientific management to the operation of the home. In her writings and lectures, Stetson contributed to the expanding body of information on home efficiency. Referring to house cleaning, she wrote,

> The organization of household industries will simplify and centralize its cleaning processes, allowing of many mechanical conveniences and the application of scientific skill and thoroughness... The daily needs of a well-plumbed house could be met easily by each individual in his or her own room or by one who liked to do such work; and the labor less frequently required would be furnished by an expert, who would clean one home after another with the swift skill of training and experience.

Similarly, she published an article that centered upon the inefficiency of current housekeeping methods. In "The Waste of Private Housekeeping," Charlotte Stetson claimed that little job specialization and unskilled labor in the home were largely responsible for the outmoded and wasteful system of home management. As early as 1891, Stetson spoke of the necessity for better domestic efficiency. In fact, she gave her domestic sociology lectures four years before Taylor popularized the scientific

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4 Haber, p. 55.
5 Haber, p. 62.
management movement. In view of this, Stetson was in the vanguard of scientific management.

**Studies in Domestic Sociology**

Charlotte Stetson began working on the idea of a domestic sociology course in mid-October of 1891. At this time, she went about the tedious and often frustrating business of soliciting interest in a series of lectures on domestic science. She spent whole days "trotting ineffectually about to form a class." Whether visiting clubs in the San Francisco Bay area or just making new acquaintances, she would talk up the idea of her course.

As plans for the class came together, she prepared a circular to advertise it. She labelled the course "Studies in Domestic Sociology"; it consisted of twelve lectures on topics associated with woman's domestic sphere. She announced the following titles:

1. What We Were, and Are, and May Be.
2. The Way Up
3. Our Domestic Duties
4. Our Maternal Duties
5. Our Social Duties
6. Our Human Duties
7. The Making of People
8. How Our Surroundings Affect Us
9. How Our Work Affects Us
10. The Economic Side of Marriage

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8 For a discussion of Frederick Taylor's paper "A Piece-Rate System; Being a Step Toward a Partial Solution of the Labor Problem," see Haber, pp. 1-3.

9 Diary, 14 October 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.


11 Diary, 21 and 31 October, 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
In the circular, Stetson explained the requirements for setting up a class. Enrollment was restricted to a minimum of twelve and maximum of twenty women. The subscription rate was $5.00 per person for the entire course of twelve lectures or $3.00 for a half a course of six lectures. Women wishing to attend an individual lecture were charged only fifty cents. As an incentive, Stetson waived the subscription fee for any woman who organized a class or who offered her parlor for a meeting place.

Stetson's efforts to promote her course eventually led to the formation of four classes in the San Francisco Bay area. Of the four, only one class engaged her for all twelve lectures. The other three groups settled for the short course of six lectures.

The pace was a demanding one for Stetson. Each class met on a different day of the week in a different locale: San Francisco, Oakland, and Alameda. Between traveling to and from class, moving her residence, lecturing to other groups, and working with Nationalists, Stetson wrote twelve class lectures. She

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12 A copy of the circular entitled "Studies in Domestic Sociology" can be found in AESL MS., fol. 10. Hereafter cited as "Circular." Also, complete manuscripts of the aforementioned lectures are available in AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 166.

13 Stetson lived awhile at 1673 Grove St., Oakland, California; however, she moved to 1258 Webster St., Oakland, where she opened a boarding house. See Diary, 18 September 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30 and 6 February 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31. Included in those engagements were Stetson's sermons in Upper Hamilton Hall, various Nationalist lectures, and lectures to a Browning club. For a reporting of these and other events see Diary, September-December 1891 and January-February 1892, AESL MS., volumes 30 and 31.
completed the first manuscript on October 27, 1891 and the last one on February 16, 1892.\textsuperscript{14}

The lectures centered on the broad topic of domestic sociology. For Stetson "domestic" referred to those functions traditionally ascribed to women, and "sociology" meant the systematic investigation of the organic relationship between the individual and humanity. Such investigation had two goals: the perfection of social organization and the advancement of human progress. Thus, domestic sociology was a scientific examination of the duties of women as they pertained to the progress of humanity.

As a major goal, Stetson wanted to show women that the world needed their help. The Sanitary Commission of the Civil War, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the many women engaged in charitable activities were indicative of women's awakening to their part in the growth of society.\textsuperscript{15} "Intelligent and conscientious women feel this responsibility," she wrote, "but are unable to reconcile it with the duties to the family."\textsuperscript{16} According to Stetson, those duties were keeping women from sharing in the progress of society: "With time and strength more than exhausted in home duties--how can we women do more than they [sic] are now doing?"\textsuperscript{17} She hoped to answer that question in her lectures. As she stated,

\textsuperscript{14} Diary, 27 October 1891 AESL MS., vol. 30 and 16 February 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.

\textsuperscript{15} "Circular," AESL MS., fol. 10.

\textsuperscript{16} "Circular," AESL MS., fol. 10.

\textsuperscript{17} "Circular," AESL MS., fol. 10.
"What I want most to bring to your mind is the especial part that 'we, as women,' have had, are having, and may have, in all this growth and change."\(^{18}\)

In the first six lectures, she examined those conditions that were impeding the growth of women and offered suggestions for change. The opening lecture set forth the single most important requirement for social progress--action.\(^{19}\) From the days of her Sunday school talks, Stetson held fast to the belief that function made organ. As such, she maintained that women were allowed to grow only in those functions directly related to sex while men enlarged their sphere of action.

Essential to any plan of social progress was a unified humanity. In "The Way Up," Stetson argued that sex-based roles had divided mankind.\(^{20}\) Over the centuries, woman's restriction to sex-based functions developed a race with distinctive halves, masculine and feminine, rather than one race with two sexes, male and female. Man's freedom to work outside of the home enabled him to grow religiously, socially, politically, and economically. On the other hand, women were not free in these areas; that is, their freedom to worship, to make friends, to engage in political activities, and to earn a living was determined by their husbands.

\(^{18}\) Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "What We Were, and Are, and May Be," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 166.

\(^{19}\) "What We Were, and Are, and May Be," AESL MS., fol. 166.

For Stetson, the key to social progress was a simple one: "The advance of the world is proportionate to the advance of women."\(^{21}\)

In the next four lectures, Stetson concentrated upon various duties traditionally assigned to women. In "Our Domestic Duties," she attempted to dispel the nineteenth-century myth that women were better fitted than men to perform domestic work and must therefore remain man's servant.\(^{22}\) In "Our Maternal Duties," she introduced the concept of collective motherhood.\(^{23}\) She felt that it was inefficient and counter productive to raise children alone and in the isolation of a single home; instead, mothers should draw upon specially trained individuals to assist them in the varied and complex process of child rearing. In "Our Social Duties," she took aim at the "intricate network of obligations" that artificially controlled the behavior of men and women in society.\(^{24}\) And in "Our Human Duties," she reiterated the importance of a unified mankind to the proper advancement of society. As such, she called for the equal distribution of the necessities of life, the world's wealth, and the world's work.\(^{25}\)

The last six lectures comprised the second half of the course. Stetson changed her approach somewhat from the earlier

\(^{21}\) "The Way Up," AESL MS., fol. 166.

\(^{22}\) Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Our Domestic Duties," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 166.


\(^{24}\) Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Our Social Duties,"AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 166.

\(^{25}\) Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Our Human Duties," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 166.
speeches. In particular, she focused less upon the domestic duties of women and more upon the sociology of womanhood. Although different in approach, Stetson's goals in the first and second halves of the course were the same. She stressed in both that women were imperfect as humans in their limited capacities as wife, mother, and domestic; that human progress required the active help of women; and that humanity must continue to seek and discover the best possible route to growth and perfection.

In "The Making of People," Stetson examined human nature from a behavioral point of view.26 She maintained that human action stemmed from one of three sources: unconscious stimulation, conscious stimulation by the brain and will, or overly cultivated tastes and habits. As for nineteenth-century women, social etiquette largely determined their behavior. Blind obedience to the prescribed roles of womanhood held women hostage. The correct making of people required the development of a strong will and sound judgment and not obedience to overdeveloped habits.

Lectures eight and nine examined the impact of surroundings and work upon the human organism.27 As an organic entity, man needed to develop equally his physical, mental, and spiritual being. Unfortunately, such material obstacles as poor housing and restrictive clothing were preventing man not only from perfecting his environment, but also his body, mind, and soul. Furthermore,

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woman's confinement to sex-based functions restricted even more her growth in these three areas.

In the last three lectures, Stetson discussed some thoughts she had on marriage, maternity, and womanhood. She argued, for example, that women should not have to marry in order to secure a means of economic support; rather, they should become producers and share in the economic responsibilities of marriage. In Stetson's mind, woman's economic dependence upon man severely hampered social progress. On maternity, she maintained that each child brought into the world belonged to the race and required the special guidance and training of not just one mother but of collective motherhood. Lastly, she brought together key points developed in previous lectures to form a final statement on womanhood. In particular, she highlighted one more time those false conditions of society that were denying its growth: woman's economic dependence upon man and her restriction to sexually-based functions.

Setting

As previously mentioned, Stetson gave each lecture in the privacy of a parlor. Members of a class would take turns hosting a meeting in their home. In the comfort and seclusion of a living


room, she encouraged her listeners to reevaluate woman's position in society. As she said on one occasion,

Now I propose to you, for one brief[,] wild[,] rebellious afternoon, to cut loose from all preconceived opinion and steer out to sea--then view the coast line dispassionately, and see if after all, the docks we lay moored to are the best.\(^{31}\)

In addition, she hoped to stimulate discussion among class members. The intimate and informal atmosphere of the home helped to reduce inhibition and encouraged women to exchange their thoughts on the particular lecture.

Although Stetson taught four separate classes, they were uniform in structure and format. Each class met on a weekday afternoon for six consecutive weeks. During that time, she gave the initial six lectures as outlined in the prospectus of the course. Each lecture lasted approximately thirty minutes. Upon its completion, Stetson invited members of the class to discuss it informally.\(^{32}\)

**Audience**

Stetson planned small, intimate gatherings of twelve to twenty members; however, she usually fell short of her goal. Class sizes varied from week to week and from class to class. On occasion she spoke to as few as two individuals or as many as eleven.\(^{33}\) Considering that she was a newcomer to the Bay area and that she was

\(^{31}\) "Our Domestic Duties," AESL MS., fol. 166. For the sake of clarity, I have inserted commas in brackets where appropriate.

\(^{32}\) "Circular," AESL MS., fol. 10.

\(^{33}\) See Diary, 27 October and 30 December 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
offering the classes for the first time, the small attendance was understandable.

For three of the four classes, Stetson recruited subscribers by visiting the homes of acquaintances; in turn, they would encourage friends to enroll in the class. In the case of the San Francisco class, however, she enlisted women from the Century Club, a local women's club. In general, clubwomen shared several characteristics. They were middle-aged, middle-class homemakers who lived in large urban areas. In addition, they were interested in social reform work related to typical female concerns: child labor reform, pure food, and better working conditions for women.

To such an audience, Stetson delivered "Our Social Duties" on November 24, 1891. On this day, a half a dozen or so women attended the class and heard one of Stetson's better class lectures. She prepared, organized, and delivered a message that not only integrated many of her thoughts on women in general, but also challenged specifically the intricate system of social obligations that retarded the growth of women.

Structural Elements

The Introduction

As a rule, class lectures have as their general aim to share or impart knowledge. Stetson planned her domestic sociology

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34 Diary, 21 October 1891, AESL MS., Vol. 30.
35 O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave, pp. 84-90.
lectures around the same goal; however, they were persuasive in
intent as well. In the proem to "Our Social Duties," she made
clear her intentions to challenge the system of social duties
prevalent in nineteenth-century America. She indicated as much
when she asked: "Whereat ariseth the heretic, and questions What
are our Social Duties [sic]?" 37

Stetson addressed a complacent audience; that is, they had
grown snug and uncritical in their prescribed social duties. In
her opening remarks, she attempted to arouse her audience out of
that passivity as well as to stimulate a critical examination of
their so called social duties. To rouse the audience, she first
reproached humanity in general for its failure to recognize fully
its true nature. She said,

This strange blind race of ours has, for a long time past,
recognized in its dim way the truth of our Common Humanity
[sic]. It has seen parts of the truth, seen them dimly and
blurred, variously discolored and distorted according to
our stained and crooked lenses, but something of the truth
it has seen.

She then scolded women for blindly submitting to a set of
social duties without thought of their impact upon themselves or
society:

But we women, trained always to sweet acquiescence with
whattover Laws [sic] are laid down to us, question not,
analyze not, dispute not, but accept and perform our Social
Duties [sic] to the best of our ability as we do the other--
blindly.

As a transition into the body of the speech, Stetson announced the
main ideas of her lecture in a series of rhetorical questions. In

37 Hereafter all citations from or references to the lecture
are from "Our Social Duties," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol.
166.
that preview, she communicated her intentions to question the nature of social obligations and to offer suggestions for change. She stated,

What relation do they [social duties] bear to other duties?
Are they essential in number, proportion, and method of performance?
Need we submit to them as we do?
What can we do better?

The Body

On the whole, Stetson organized the content of the domestic sociology series in a problem-solution format. In each lecture, she focused on some problematical condition concerning women in the nineteenth century and offered recommendations for change or improvement. With progress and perfection as ultimate goals, she proposed changes in such areas as marriage, child care, and domestic duties. In a similar fashion, she ordered the main points of "Our Social Duties" in a problem-solution pattern.

A significant portion of the speech concerned the problem itself; it asked how humanity could replace artificial social obligations with true social duties. In order to clarify the scope and urgency of the problem, she defined a number of terms pertaining to it as well as stressing their impact upon society. First, she used definition by example to distinguish a real duty from a false one. She maintained that a duty existed only as long as its need. For example, hospitality sprang from the precarious nature of travel and lack of proper lodging in the early days of civilization. She explained,
When human creatures lived widely apart, when roads were few and bad, travel dangerous, and inns almost unknown, either humanity must stay wholly at home, humanity must suffer severely in travel, or humanity must constitute itself a committee of the whole to entertain and protect travellers.

Hospitality then emerged in response to the needs of travelling strangers. On the other hand, with improved travel and lodging, the need to shelter strangers in one's home yielded to entertaining acquaintances. Stetson believed that the former was a social duty and the latter a social obligation.

Next, she explained how forming friendships became obligation rather than duty. She maintained that individuals selected friends with a careful eye for economic advantage:

As a man will select a good church and go to it, and help support it, avowedly to help himself in business, so will he select acquaintances and those of his wife and children—with an eye to advantage and disadvantage.

Furthermore, since women depended upon marriage as a means of livelihood, they exhibited themselves in public to attract the attention of a financially suitable mate.

Stetson was especially sarcastic when it came to woman's economic dependence upon man. That sarcasm later dotted the pages of *Women and Economics*. For instance, she wrote,

From the odalisque with the most bracelets to the debutante with the most bouquets, the relation still holds good,—woman's economic profit comes through the power of sex-attraction.

Her sarcastic attitude, however, contributed to her efforts to rouse the ire of her listeners. She hoped to excite them into a

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critical frame of mind so as to study their social habits. Sneering at the imposed machinations of courtship was part of that strategy.

To clarify further the problem, she explained the nature and purpose of society. Ideally, social life should be based upon the mutual attraction of individuals with similar interests and not upon unnaturally imposed social obligations. Unfortunately, economic gain, bloodline, and proper education had restricted the natural formation of friendships. Stetson maintained that society was stuck together rather than united by mutual interests.

As to the purpose of society, her explanation focused upon the principles of progress and perfection. According to Stetson, "Society should be a vast field of advancement, a means of reaching the best growth of the human soul . . ." However, artificial social duties were not only shortcircuiting society's advancement, but also were preventing the growth of its membership. She stated,

For every year, every day that is spent in the measured stepping of this elaborate dance [social duties], we human creatures lose the power and lose the wish to live the strong free noble lives which are not only our right but our duty!

The solution part of the speech was brief in comparison to the problem portion. That imbalance was understandable in light of Stetson's intention to establish the ridiculous nature of nineteenth-century social life. Nevertheless, she proposed a set of "good social duties" to replace the ones she labelled obligations. First, she exhorted her listeners to live in an honest and unselfish manner. By doing so, each individual would
contribute to the awakening of humanity's oneness. Secondly, she urged them to interact with others regardless of wealth, class, or training. Such would further awaken humanity to the realization that human cooperation was essential to social progress. Most importantly, mankind needed to act upon false social conditions. She drove that point home in her closing remarks.

The Conclusion

On the whole, Stetson ended her speech in the same way as she began it: she tried to provoke her listeners into action. She urged them not only to examine any routine duty as to its necessity or relevancy to human life, but also to change if it were deemed unnecessary or irrelevant.

She heightened her appeal to action by using several analogies. For example, she spoke of the Sunday sermon which often stirred the congregation on Sunday, but had little lasting impact upon the listeners. Similarly, the unexpected death of a child, mother, or father frequently excited momentary reflections upon the meaning and direction of life. Unfortunately, those thoughts usually passed without significant alteration of routine daily lives: "But the duties go right on, the immediate pressure of little things that must be done, and we give our remonstrance and start again." For Stetson, social duties needed more than momentary reflection; they needed careful consideration with an ultimate goal of improvement. Her analogies pointed up the importance of critical thought on one hand and the necessity for action on the other. She drove this point home when she said:
"We need all to stop and consider, and not forever spend real human lives gracefully repetitious of nothing at all."

Forms of Proof

Logical Proofs

"Our Social Duties" was a deliberative speech in the classical sense of the word. Stetson established a need for change by setting forth the problematical nature of existing social duties. She also spoke of a future where cooperation and unity would characterize social life and not economic gain or selfishness. Lastly, the end of her speech was expediency: she felt it advantageous to implement immediately her proposed changes in social life.

Throughout the speech, she argued from the Aristotelian premise that excessiveness was disadvantageous and thus not expedient. In doing so, she used enthymemes from the topos of consequence. According to Aristotle,

\[
\text{Since it commonly happens that a given thing has consequences both good and bad, you may argue from these in urging or dissuading, in prosecuting or defending, in praising or blaming.}
\]

First, she discussed the negative consequences of a society enamored with economic gain. She maintained that the urgent push "to better oneself" had adversely affected the natural human tendency to form friendships based upon mutual attraction; instead, they were carefully made as to their economic or social potential.

\[39\] The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 32.

\[40\] The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 166.
She provided no authoritative or verifiable evidence in support of the aforementioned generalization; rather, she relied upon the shared thoughts and goals of the listeners to establish the logic of the argument. For example, she acknowledged the natural desire of a mother or father to want the best for their children. However, that desire had become excessive and devious in design. As Stetson noted, "It all comes back to the perfectly right and honest desire to live and enjoy; but it works through devious ways."

In explanation, she drew again upon the natural instinct of parents to desire perfect and successful marriages for their children. Such a premise was axiomatic. Unfortunately, inordinate interest in money and status led to a false condition: mothers and fathers carefully screened acquaintances as to financial and social status in hopes of arranging proper marriages for their children. Furthermore, women concocted elaborate schemes in order to marry well.

To do this, they [women] must have a chance to be seen, seen at their best, have a chance to exhibit all of personal beauty and charm, taste in dress, elegance of manner, education and accomplishment, all that we [society] have given them—their only weapons to conquer if not earn a livelihood.

Another consequence of society's preoccupation with money was a restraint upon social progress. Stetson asserted that a system of social advancement based entirely upon financial gain was unnatural and disruptive to society. In support, she posed a hypothetical situation and suggested two separate avenues of action. She asked her listeners to imagine a group of children
who needed help in their studies. Grouping them according to special needs—physical, mental, or social—was a natural reaction. On the other hand, they could be grouped according to financial status. She asked: "What purpose could such classification serve?" For Stetson, the answer was clear—none. For the audience, common sense told them that the latter course of action was absurd. She drove the point home when she said: "If society is not built on the natural drawing together of persons of similar taste, character, intellect, occupation, or other just ground, it must be artificial."

In addition, that artificiality adversely affected individual growth. Unable to form associations based on mutual attraction, man eventually lost the desire. She offered several analogies in support of the point. For example, she pointed out that a great intellect reduced only to playing croquet would eventually master the game at the expense of intellectual growth. According to Stetson,

"For every act that is false you lose a little the desire to act truly. For every act that is artificial you lose a little the desire to act naturally. For every act that is illogical you lose a little the desire to act logically."

Stetson argued mostly about the undesirable consequences of certain artificial social obligations; nevertheless, she did make a case for her desirable social duties. Aristotle noted that the aim of deliberative rhetoric was to establish expediency: "Now the aim of one who gives counsel is utility; for men deliberate, not about the ends to be attained, but about the means of
attaining these; and the means are expedient things to do. In addition, he claimed that anything expedient was good. To clarify the term "good," he defined it as anything inherently desirable; anything desired by sentient beings; or anything that rendered an individual self-sufficient. Specifically, he considered as good happiness, virtuosity, health, wealth, friendship, honor, and natural intelligence.

Stetson used two notions of good: happiness and friendship. Throughout the speech, she stressed the inherent value of social progress and connected it directly to happiness. In one instance, she related what friendship might mean to the happiness of man if certain conditions changed:

Our restrictions are false, our distinctions artificial, our system plainly injurious; and yet under and through it all the human soul does dimly touch at times—friendships are formed—\textit{a few real equals and similars meet and live and work and enjoy together—} and that is Society [sic].

She also connected happiness and social progress to the inherently desirable freedom of social interaction. Such a condition was healthy and conducive to human growth and cooperation. She observed,

All being free to select associates would inevitably drift into the company of their likes by natural law—\textit{the law of cohesion}. But, being still free, there would be a constant intercourse between the people on the edges—people not so rigidly specialized; and in that freedom all the powers of humanity would have room to grow their best.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{41} The \textit{Rhetoric of Aristotle}, p. 29.
\item \textbf{42} The \textit{Rhetoric of Aristotle}, pp. 30-31.
\end{itemize}
In summary, Stetson structured her logical proofs around the topos of consequences. She set out to prove the undesirability and subsequent harm of present social duties. In addition, she argued that it was advantageous to change, linking such action to happiness and progress. However, logical proofs were not sufficient to arouse an audience that had grown comfortable and complacent in their social habits. Consequently, she used a number of emotional appeals not only to induce immediate discussion, but also to evoke a firm commitment to action on the part of the listeners.

Emotional Proofs

Stetson set the emotional tone of the speech in the introduction. She was satiric and accusatory in her criticism of humanity. Some recognized only partially the truth of mankind's unity, others refused such recognition, while others chose simply to submit blindly to their destiny. In her emotional appeals, she planned to excite her listeners out of their 'sweet acquiescence.' As part of that strategy, she aroused the emotion of shame.

Aristotle noted that shame sprang from a feeling of disgrace over some evil action. For example, any vice was capable of evoking shame. In "Our Social Duties," she stressed the vicious elements of social life. For instance, the virtue of hospitality had been transformed into a game of acquired association.

Our Society[sic] requires acquaintance. Hospitality, pure and simple, is the offering of one's advantages to the stranger, free and fully, to place the stranger

43 The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 112.
on the same level of warmth, shelter, safety, and physical content as ourselves--because he is a stranger. We neither give nor ask such virtues now.

Excessive desire for money was ignoble, too. Competition and economic gain developed a general meanness of spirit and greediness in society as a whole. Stetson felt it shameful that "careful civility" and "mutual guard" had pushed aside the virtues of beneficence and good will. Instead, inhabitants of cities walked "the crowded streets unsmiling, untouched, with unsympathetic eyes."

Another vice was the artificiality of nineteenth-century society. For Stetson social life depended upon trust and mutual support. Such a condition was not possible where there existed excessive greed, selfishness, and materialism. More importantly, the artificial attraction of money cheapened human relationships. To intensify her point, she likened society to a cheap toy; one that was "sewed and hammered, glued and screwed" together. Later, she labelled those who submitted without question to the system of social obligations as "sawdust dolls." Instead of active, growing, and productive individuals, they were passive, lifeless, and barren toys.

Stetson's strategy was appropriate when measured against the audience's emotional disposition. Stetson believed that the

44 Aristotle viewed meanness of spirit as the opposite of magnanimity and greediness the opposite of liberality. See The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 47.
audience needed rousing from a state of quiet submission to artificial social duties. Evoking shame awakened her listeners to a problem; however, that was not sufficient to move an audience to action. Thus, Stetson carefully wove into her speech subtle yet sharp criticism of man's subjugation of woman. She planned to energize her listeners by arousing the emotion of indignation.

She excited indignation by exposing the unfair advantage of males over females in society. She maintained that women were given the social world as compensation for their deprivation of the "real world." For Stetson, the real world meant equal opportunity in political, economic, and intellectual development. In a critical way, she made it sound as if man felt guilty for the apparent injustice and therefore offered social life as a form of appeasement or retribution.

Equally unfair was the unnecessary pressure placed upon women to marry someone financially secure. Such was a necessity for a woman if she desired to become wealthy. On the other hand, marrying well was a luxury and not a necessity for man. As she stated, "He could support a poor wife, and grow rich notwithstanding. He can build his own fortune." As such, man had an outlet for the factitious games of social life; woman had no safety valve. Instead, she went home to carry out other duties: maternal or domestic. She heightened her appeal to indignation when she said, "We [woman] go home and leave off playing for a while. And half the world has its broad genuine productive life with which to offset the social life."
Stetson's arousal of shame and indignation complemented each other. On the one hand, her evocation of shame awakened in the listeners a sense of humiliation for their part in the falsity of social life. On the other hand, she excited anger and resentment with her appeal to indignation. As such, she instilled a sense of determination to change those undesirable elements of society.

**Ethical Proofs**

Stetson established worthiness of character by connecting herself with the virtuous. From the beginning, she demonstrated courage in her bold critique of nineteenth-century society. She exposed several vices that were corrupting natural social interaction: greed, selfishness, and artificiality. In other class lectures, she displayed similar audaciousness. While in "Our Social Duties" she likened herself to a "heretic," she described her thoughts as "rebellious" in "Our Domestic Duties." In each instance, she conveyed strength of character in her straightforward challenge of long-standing duties. That boldness might have backfired had she not complemented it with a worthy plan of action.

She balanced her sharp criticism of social duties with a noble plan for social improvement. In typical Stetson fashion, she centered her action around a beneficent and just principle: humanity, as a unified entity, must work together for progress. Accordingly, she called upon her listeners to cast aside individualism and selfishness and live for the sake of others:

45 "Our Domestic Duties," AESL MS., fol. 166.
We may think and feel in common, act in common somewhat too; but most of our acts are individual. And here it becomes an individual duty to so live as to bring about this true social life which we can not [sic] have now.

Lastly, Stetson enhanced her character by calling for justice in the name of womanhood. Throughout the speech, she took aim at the unfair advantage men held over women, especially economically. She felt it unjust and ignoble that women were economically, socially, and politically dependent upon men. Such a condition violated the principle of unity in mankind and thus thwarted the growth of women. According to Stetson, when man is "led to act ignobly, such ignoble deeds, constantly done, react upon the soul and injure it."

In addition to character, Stetson established sagacity by demonstrating a thoughtful analysis of human behavior. Displaying a keen sense of observation, she discussed several forms of human interaction --friendship, marriage, and child rearing--and exposed their improper motivations. She used examples that a middle-class, urban audience could not only relate to, but also suggested common sense. For instance, she acknowledged the human desire to improve oneself financially and socially; however, that tendency had grown excessive and weakened the true underpinning of social attraction--mutual attraction. Thus, friendships were made and marriages arranged that benefitted the pocketbook at the expense of the relationship. She tempered that criticism and displayed good taste by recognizing the reality of such motivations. "I do not say this is wrong--we must live--we must try to prosper--and these are our methods--at present."
Stetson also proved her intellectual integrity by inferring conclusions from a number of social principles. They were the unity of mankind, the law of action and reaction, and the law of cohesion. From the beginning of her speaking career, unity and action were commonplaces in her social reform rhetoric. They reflected her familiarity with current interpretations of social evolution. In addition, she enhanced further her wisdom by using the law of cohesion: the inevitable drift of mankind to select associates based upon mutual likes. Thus, she demonstrated insight into the dynamics of social interaction.

Finally, she fashioned good will with her audience by several means. First, the nature of the audience and occasion naturally encouraged the development of rapport. Since the classes were small and held informally in the homes of friends and acquaintances, cordiality was inevitable. Additionally, since this was the fifth meeting of the class, members had had ample opportunity to become personally acquainted with their instructor. Secondly, Stetson held firmly to her goal and challenged her listeners. As such, she presented herself as a devil's advocate, defying many time-honored social institutions. Yet she tempered that defiance with an honest and sincere desire to improve the lives of her listeners as well as all of humanity. Thirdly, she created rapport by identifying with the wants and desires of her audience. Specifically, she acknowledged their natural inclinations to improvement and to become productive members of society. Stetson offered them a plan that would help them
accomplish such aspirations. Thus, she conveyed the image of a friend, a messenger of truth who sought only to improve the lot of mankind.

Effectiveness

The small, intimate gatherings that came to hear Charlotte Stetson lecture on domestic sociology were appreciative. Fortunately, Stetson made daily notations in her diary about each class meeting. From these it is possible to draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of the lectures.

For the most part, the four classes responded favorably to the lectures. As might be expected, class attendance and responsiveness varied from week to week. For instance, Stetson described the second meeting of the Friday group as a "Lively time"; however, the following week it was "Small and Cold."\(^{46}\) In fact, she considered this group as the least enjoyable and responsive of the four and rejoiced when its meeting ended.\(^ {47}\) Fortunately, the Monday and Wednesday classes were more appreciative and lively. She noted especially the pleasant atmosphere of the Alameda class and the apparent interest. After a lecture, she wrote, "A very interesting meeting."\(^ {48}\)

\(^{46}\) Diary, 13 and 20 November 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.

\(^{47}\) Diary, 20 November and 11 December 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.

\(^{48}\) Diary, 9 December 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
However, Stetson derived the most satisfaction and inspired the liveliest of responses from the San Francisco class. After the first lecture, she felt so encouraged by the pleasant response that she returned home to write in her diary: "Came home hilarious." That pleasant feeling later translated into extra money when three new subscribers came the following week. Similarly, the third meeting was "Very Pleasant." Yet the most revealing evidence as to the favorable impact of the lectures upon this class came when members agreed to subscribe for an additional six lectures. The San Francisco class was the only group to do so and indicated significant interest on its part in Stetson and her lectures.

As for long-term significance, Stetson's class lectures were important for several reasons. First, they placed her in the vanguard of a new movement: scientific management. She was on the cutting edge of a movement to professionalize and make more efficient the domestic responsibilities of women.

49 Diary, 27 October 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
50 Diary, 3 November 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
51 Diary, 10 November 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
domestic sociology lectures, she took her message directly to women and encouraged them to reevaluate long established ideas and practices concerning domestic, social, and maternal duties. In a small way, she initiated at the grassroots level an important element of progressive thought that such figures as Herbert Croly, Louis Brandeis, and Walter Lippmann later would take up.

The class lectures also contributed in part to Stetson's eventual success as a professional lecturer. The diversity of topics in the series greatly expanded her appeal as a speaker. More importantly, many of the same thoughts on domesticity found their way into her lectures after 1900. In a promotional brochure, Stetson announced a new season of talks. Although the titles had changed, many were closely tied to the early domestic sociology lectures. Some of the titles were "The Nature of Humanity," "What Work Is," "The Home and the World," "Woman's Place in Civilization," "The Waste of Housekeeping," and "The Mistakes of Mothers."

In addition, published works linked directly to the series include The Home, Human Work, Concerning Children, and The Man-Made World, or Our Androcentric Culture. Thus, the class lectures provided Stetson an opportunity to formulate and test new ideas she had on domesticity that later became the heart of her social theory. Also, they helped in a small way to keep Stetson financially solvent, enabling her to continue to write and speak.

Chapter VII

"The Unity of Man"

As Charlotte Stetson earnestly set about the task of preparing her domestic sociology lectures, other speaking engagements were forthcoming that also vied for her time. She had aroused the interest of Nationalists, clubwomen, and church groups in the Bay area with her intriguing ideas on society, economics, and women. Usually, that interest or curiosity translated into a lecture invitation. Consequently, much to Stetson's delight, she was engaged for a series of sermons to be delivered at the historic Hamilton Hall in the heart of San Francisco. This chapter examines the second sermon in the series entitled "The Unity of Man," delivered on December 13, 1891.¹

Background

An Invitation to Preach

In San Francisco, Stetson actively worked with Dr. Kellog Lane, a staunch Nationalist, to organize a New Nation Club in the city. She helped to write the club's constitution as well as to

find a permanent meeting hall. Equally important, Stetson's involvement with the New Nation Club introduced her to other Bay area reformers. Making new acquaintances in San Francisco opened the way for Stetson to preach again. In November of 1891, a Nationalist couple, Mr. and Mrs. Salzer, invited Stetson to preach "to a little group on Sunday evenings in Hamilton Hall." Two equally strong motives moved Stetson to accept the offer: money and opportunity. Although the compensation was minimal (she was guaranteed $2.50 for each sermon) the chance to preach was more than enough incentive. She reflected that enthusiasm when she wrote in her diary: "I am called to the Ministry [sic]."

As it turned out, Stetson preached on four consecutive Sundays in December of 1891. The sermons were entitled "Reality," "The Unity of Man," "The Present Duty," and "The Human Will." As the titles suggest, each sermon focused upon a different subject; nevertheless, Stetson connected the four with a central subject: ethical conduct. She repeatedly stressed in the sermons the necessity for proper moral conduct on the part of humanity. She hoped to instill in the minds of her audience a desire to live and work together as a common humanity, unified by the goals of right behavior, self-improvement, and the growth of mankind.

4 For complete manuscripts of the aforementioned sermons see AESL MS., unpublished sermons, fol. 167.
Setting

Stetson delivered "The Unity of Man" in the historic First Unitarian Church of San Francisco located on the southwest corners of Geary and Franklin Streets. The ivy-covered church, constructed of gray stone, was of a "modified Romanesque and Gothic design." Thomas Starr King, "militant pastor of the Civil War period," laid the cornerstone for the church in December of 1862. King died shortly after the church's dedication and the Reverend Horatio Stebbins assumed the pastorate. He served in that capacity for the next thirty-five years and was pastor at the time of Stetson's sermons.

The First Unitarian Church was a mecca for social, political, and economic reformers. Horatio Stebbins invited many prominent men and women to preach from the pulpit of his church. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward Everett Hale, Julia Ward Howe, and David Starr Jordan were among the visiting speakers. Stetson was equal to the examples set by her predecessors and added to the church's rich tradition of reform. The setting, then, was well-suited to Stetson's brand of reform oratory; likewise, the audience was equally receptive to her notions on religion and society.

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6 San Francisco, p. 301.

7 San Francisco, p. 301.

8 San Francisco, p. 301.
Audience

Although not totally unexpected, attendance was sparse for all four sermons; in fact, the Salzers indicated as much when they invited Stetson to speak to a "little group." Stetson estimated that about twenty people were present for her first sermon. The second sermon attracted a few more people, but not a significant increase from the first night. On the third Sunday, she spoke "to a small but very appreciative audience." Despite the meager attendance, the audience was certainly congenial and receptive to Stetson and her message.

The small gathering that came to hear Stetson's sermon "The Unity of Man" included mostly friends, social-political reformers, and liberal Christians. Mary Perkins, a spiritualist, came to hear her daughter preach. Stetson's good friend and fellow Nationalist, Dr. Kellog Lane, also attended that night; moreover, the Salzers's, who extended the invitation, were Nationalists. There were a number of Unitarians present as well, bringing their open-minded view on Christianity to the occasion.

10 Diary, 6 December 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
12 Unidentified newsclipping located in AESL MS., newscloppings, fol. 286.
15 Stetson indicated in her sermon "The Present Duty" that there were Unitarians present in the audience. See Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "The Present Duty," AESL MS., unpublished sermons, fol. 167.
At first glance, the audience appeared as a melange of leftist-oriented activists. On the contrary, they were a homogeneous group in respect to their humanistic temperaments. Utopian Nationalists and liberal Unitarians shared a basic desire: they envisioned a time when brotherhood and benevolence would replace competition and selfishness. They differed only in that nationalism sought an economic transformation and Unitarians a moral one. Stetson, too, shared in that desire and prepared a sermon that she hoped would move the world a little closer to that ideal state. To accomplish that goal, Stetson carefully structured the basic parts of her speech.

Structural Elements

The Introduction

In an effort to capture attention, Stetson began her sermon on "The Unity of Man" with a simple declarative sentence. She stated, "The thing I speak of tonight is one of those facts the perception of which does not require faith only sight." The opening statement prepared the audience for a discussion on or about an observable fact. The gathering was not unaccustomed to Stetson's proclivity to speak on "facts of life." In fact, only a week earlier, she had spoken to the group on another great truth that existed in the universe. Stetson's intention to expose

16 Herewith all citations from or references to "The Unity of Man" are from Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "The Unity of Man," AESL MS., unpublished sermons, fol. 167.

again a great truth, vastly ignored by humanity, served to connect
the first and second sermons. The statement, however, did not
reveal the subject of her address. She referred to it as a "thing,"
hoping to stimulate the curiosity of the audience. She continued
to use the technique of suspense throughout the introduction.

She previewed the content of her speech in the very next
sentence. In the preview, she maintained that the suffering of
mankind was due largely to man's failure to see and use certain
universal truths. As she stated,

The truths of the universe are there all the time, and the
human mind wanders among them, stumbles over them, suffers
under them, at last sees them, and can then make use of
them.

Emotions, or sentiments, played a significant role in
Unitarian theology. Historian David Walker Howe summarized the
importance of sentiments to Unitarians when he wrote:

They [sentiments] offered Unitarians great hope for the
implementation of man's nobler ideals. To achieve their
aspirations, the Unitarians invoked those "affections in
man, which not only suppose reason, but are founded on it;
such as the love of truth, the love of beauty, the love of
nature, and the love of God." By cultivating such
sentiments as these, a man could maintain contact with the
spiritual world, and elevate himself above the mundane.

In a similar way, Stetson affirmed the reality of affections in
the spiritual world. She pointed out that such sentiments as "bad
temper," "peace of mind," "love or hate," and "hope or fear" were
all elements in the spiritual nature of man and played a significant
role in man's conduct on earth.

18 Daniel Walker Howe, The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard
Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,
Stetson's opening remarks, then, prepared the audience for a sermon that was to deal with a universal truth. That truth, according to Stetson, was of a spiritual nature; nevertheless, it was as real as any object that existed in the material world. She teased her audience throughout the early moments of her sermon, suggesting the nature of her subject but not revealing it. Only after she had aroused sufficient interest and was ready to move to the body of her speech did she state her subject and purpose. She stated, "The truth I want you to see tonight—the unity of man, [sic] is as simple and demonstrable a fact as the indestructibility of matter."

The Body

Stetson set out in her sermon to prove a fact: the unity of man. She explicitly stated such in her statement of purpose. The sermon was persuasive in that sense; however, she also sought to influence the behavior of her listeners. As such, Stetson continued a long tradition in Unitarian preaching to induce action by the skillful use of persuasive techniques. Early nineteenth-century Harvard Unitarians, for example, recognized the persuasive power of the pulpit and used it to move men to proper moral conduct. Edward Tyrell Channing, Professor of Pastoral Theology and Pulpit Eloquence at the Harvard Divinity School stated that the goal of oratory, even religious eloquence, was to influence men "to our way of thinking and thus make them act

19 Howe, p. 161.
according to our wishes." In her religious oratory, Stetson embraced with equal fervor the desire to motivate man to recognize the importance of proper moral conduct and sought to evoke such action. In her sermon "The Present Duty," for instance, she called upon humanity to live together and to recognize that the action of one affected all, for good or evil. Most important, she maintained that man's present duty was "to do right, in a new and hopeful way." As she said, "It is by what we do now, that lives are made—and history too."21

In order to convince her audience that the unity of man was fact, she arranged the major points of her speech in a problem-solution format. Normally, this particular structure is used in the advocacy of a proposed policy, not the verification of a truth. However, as she illustrated in her opening remarks, certain laws have existed since the creation of the universe. Unfortunately, many of those laws have remained undiscovered or misinterpreted over the ages. In that sense, Stetson's effort to prove the unity of man hinged upon the resolution of a simple question: is the individual dependent upon the greater mass of humanity? As she stated,

I do not wish you to think of it as a vague and misty theory, a floating thought which concerns you not at all, but as a vital truth, a fact of life, a thing which must be understood before we can rightly think of man at all.

20 Quoted in Howe, p. 162.

That she arranged her sermon in a problem-solution format indicated a strengthening in Stetson's commitment to a life of reform. She perceived certain problematical conditions in the social-economic order of America that she felt needed immediate rectification. Stetson believed that it was necessary to reorganize the economic structure in such a way as to redistribute in an equal fashion the wealth of the nation. Edward Bellamy's utopian novel, Looking Backward, outlined such a plan that emphasized the collective welfare of the mass of humanity. In the four sermons at Upper Hamilton Hall, Stetson revealed a growing confidence in utopian socialism. Her sermon on "The Unity of Man" contained references to the importance of a collective intelligence and the necessity of a collective economy. She exclaimed,

To be together is the human necessity, the unity of humanity is the condition of its existence. In the realization and perfection of our unity do we rightly live, and the failure to realize it is our widest error.

Other social and political exigencies were pressing their weight upon Stetson. They included woman's second class citizenship, intemperance, and labor injustice. Social inequities awakened in Stetson an understanding of her role in life as a social reformer. By its nature, the desire to reform suggests the recognition of some disjuncture between the ideal and the real and a desire to eliminate that discrepancy by the advocacy of a solution. To her way of thinking, the recognition of man's unity, a simple reality of the universe, was sufficient to correct the course of human progress.
Stetson divided the problem portion of her speech into two sections. The first part identified certain unique aspects of humanity that united mankind, and the second part illustrated in various ways the oneness of humanity.

In the first part, Stetson focused her attention upon certain physical, mental, and spiritual attributes of man that she believed comprised the essence of man's unity. Using the rhetorical question for attention and interest, Stetson asked her audience how primitive man, beastly in nature, differed from other beasts in the universe. She indicated that man was unique among other animals in that he was of the order binary; that is, he walked on two feet and in an erect fashion. The key distinction, however, was with man's use of his hands. Stetson suggested that the human hand evolved as purposeful instruments guided by the brain and not as additional feet to walk upon. She maintained that the brain acquired greater sophistication in direct relation to man's sophisticated use of the hands. She stated,

But the real hand, the free hand, the hand not used as a foot, not calloused [sic] by the touch of earth and weighted by the pressure of the body, the hand in connection with the two feet and the erect posture--this is an organ for the brain.

Stetson arranged her discussion of man's cognitive abilities in a similar way, showing a direct correlation between the advancement of civilization and sophistication in human brain function. As a society became increasingly more complex, its members recognized a greater need to cooperate with each other. As a result, man developed a language system that enabled him to share information and nurture a cooperative spirit. The
evolution of speech depended upon the advancement of society, and
the advancement of society depended upon the development of speech.
For Stetson, the complex cognitive skill of verbal communication
was proof enough of the unity of man.

Another factor that unified the mass of humanity was the
religious nature of man. Stetson developed this point in a
fashion consistent with her Unitarian tendencies. According to
Unitarian theology, religion was an essential part of human
nature, given by God to be cultivated by man. Stetson referred
to this belief in her discussion of the spiritual nature of man.
She told her listeners that the soul of man, the spiritual being
residing in man, created by God in His likeness, was a unique
aspect of humanity. "This vague idea we name the soul," she
stated, "is simply humanity." She had argued the same point in her
Sunday school talk on God, emphasizing in that lesson that God
resided in all men. The decision to discuss the spiritual nature
of man enhanced the appropriateness of the sermon to the listeners
and the occasion. Additionally, the religious theme exemplified
Stetson's persistent efforts to accommodate scientific theory with
Christian doctrine.

To complete the problem portion of her speech, Stetson
offered a series of examples intended to illustrate the impact of
humanity as a whole upon the behavior of the individual. "You
cannot separate the individual," she asserted, "in this composite
thing we name humanity." She pointed out that a king governed

Howe, p. 98.
according to the conditions of his people, "as they are must his government be." In similar fashion, Stetson maintained that a writer was ultimately the product of humanity. In order for the writer to sell books, he must please the buyer; consequently, he must write according to the tastes of the reader. In Stetson's view, "We make our author's today, more than they make us."

A speaker who develops a problem-solution speech generally attempts to show that his proposed solution is workable by visualizing the plan in action as well as detailing benefits derived from its implementation. Stetson arranged the solution phase of her sermon in such a manner. In comparison to the problem portion of the sermon, however, the solution phase was underdeveloped. Such a disparity in development was not inappropriate considering the fact that the problem and its solution were one and the same thing.

Stetson's primary goal was to prove the unity of man, a long ignored fact of the universe. That neglect produced a "paralytic" disease, stopping the progress of man. To cure that paralysis, the individual simply had to recognize his oneness with humanity--the solution. To amplify this point, Stetson visualized for her audience the benefits of that realization. She said,

When we begin to realize our own identity . . . then we shall use our common intelligence to study our common distresses, our common power to throw off our common abuses and then begin a happiness as wide as the world, in knowing that the world is happy.
The Conclusion

Stetson began the conclusion of her sermon with a straightforward reiteration of her thesis: "We are and must be one." The remainder of her final remarks sought to amplify that point as well as to inspire a firm commitment on the part of her audience to live in accordance with that theme. To accomplish that end, Stetson again illustrated her fondness for the dialectic, constructing a series of statements that juxtaposed opposites.

Using the rhetorical devices of antithesis and parallel construction to heighten the impact of her appeal, Stetson made a personal plea to her audience to recognize the unity of man.

In our ignorance and weakness we sink together, in our wisdom and strength we shall rise together.

I ask of you no struggle after vast new thoughts--only a recognition of that which is.

I ask no sacrifice of self or others, only to see that there is no self in the individual--he is only a piece!

Stetson next developed an example that stressed the dialectical themes of life-death and knowledge-ignorance. She pointed out that a soldier engaged in battle knew full well the importance of fighting in a "solid rank." The excitement of battle stirred the individual into recognizing his dependence upon his comrades. As such, each soldier willingly accepted death in order that others might live. Unfortunately, the soldier returned from war only to live in ignorance of man's unity, impeding the life of society.

Stetson used the themes of life-death and knowledge-ignorance again to focus attention upon the future. Projecting a sense of
hope, she envisioned a time when the fear of death would not be necessary to arouse man into recognizing his unity with other men. Knowledge of such unity would arise out of a common commitment to advance the quality of life on earth. She stated,

But the time is coming, and soon, when it shall need no shock of pain and shame to rouse us, no national disgrace, no fear of common death and ruin, but the knowledge of the pain and shame and national disgrace of this our daily life, shall rouse us, and we shall feel our poverty as one, our ignorance as one, our viciousness as one, and draw together in our common humanity to live—not die—for ourselves as well as the others, for rations and pay included, but most of all for duty's and honor's sake, for God and home and native land.

Forms of Proof

Logical Proofs

Stetson developed a line of thought in her sermon by which she intended to prove the unity of man. To that end, she advanced a number of premises drawn from a basic assumption: social evolution, as a progressive law of development, is moving society to perfection. To prove each premise brought forth in her sermon, Stetson relied extensively upon examples and analogies extracted either from natural history or Christian doctrine. Stetson's logical proofs depended, then, upon a demonstrative enthymeme from which she inferred her conclusion that humanity was one. The audience, primarily Unitarians and Nationalists, agreed upon the acceptability of the enthymeme.

23 The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 158.
It was not uncommon for the social evolutionist to demonstrate the progressive nature of social evolution by tracing in an analogous way the development of some species living in the the universe. Stetson employed a similar strategy in her sermon. She inferred from specific instances two important conclusions that proved the unity of man. She concluded that the development of the human race was based upon a common growth and that "living together" was a necessary condition for the continued existence of mankind.

Stetson's first series of examples intended to demonstrate that humanity's common growth was drawn from accepted anthropological assumptions concerning the origin of man. As she stated,

I will not go back of facts, known, proven, scientific facts. So far as now known, the earliest traces of man, which are found in varying localities, far apart, all indicate an organism of an extremely low type.

She cited instances that illustrated man's evolution from a savage to a civilized being. The first stage of development entailed the co-evolution of the hands and brain. The hands and brain developed together. The brain grew in its capability to perform complex actions as a result of the exercise of the hands. "Only in the growth of the brain," she asserted, "had man begun to be human."

The example reinforced an enthymeme rooted in organic evolutionary theory; that is, that function determines organ.

Stetson then discussed another stage in the development of man which focused upon primitive man's socialization process. Stetson contended that the savage, alone and isolated from others,

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24 Wiebe, The Search for Order, pp. 140-141.
failed to grow, implying that he remained primitive and individualistic in nature. "But," she countered, "put the savages together. You have a development in wants, a complexity of action, that calls for speech and gets it." Complex functions of interdependent living enhanced further the complex capabilities of the brain, inducing man to develop a system of communication. Stetson believed that the individual acquired the ability to communicate in order to exchange ideas with other men. It was not a skill developed individually; rather, it was a skill acquired by the individual for the benefit of humanity. She supported this point by citing several analogous instances in modern times. For example, she pointed out that a man who builds a bridge does so not for his individual pleasure; instead, he erects it for the common use and progress of humanity.

Stetson believed that the "intellect of humanity" was an essential component in the progress of society in much the same way as Lester Ward wrote of the "collective intelligence." In an effort to establish a causal relationship between heredity and the cognitive development of humanity, she offered little concrete evidence to support her cause to effect case; rather, she relied upon the audience's acceptance of the theory of evolution. In place of factual data, she used the stylistic techniques of

25 The similarity between Stetson's "intellect of humanity" and Lester Ward's "collective intelligence" is striking. It is probable that Stetson was acquainted with Ward's concept of psychic factors and collective intelligence. However, she apparently had not read *Dynamic Sociology* nor *Psychic Factors of Civilization* until 1897. See Letter from Charlotte Perkins Stetson to Houghton Gilman, 5 June 1897, AESL MS., fol. 42.
rhetorical question and parallel sentence construction to convey a 
tone of logicality. The two techniques worked together to suggest 
a systematic inquiry reminiscent of the ancient dialectic. 26

Stetson first posed a question and then answered it herself, 
constructing her response in parallel form. She asked: "Did you 
make your own brain?" And she responded,

Because you live in this age you are modern. Because you 
are born in this land you are American. Because of your 
inherited faculties your brain is thus and thus endowed. 
And with all that, if you had never seen your fellow man 
where would your brain be?

She then moved to the field of education and posed another series 
of questions. She queried,

How comes it that you know about arithmetic or geography 
or grammar? Have you discovered these things? By whose 
society and conversation have you benefitted all your life? 
In what reading of unnumbered books have you spread your 
wings and fed on all men's thoughts? And by what daily 
surroundings of civilized life have you been made the man 
you are?

In Stetson's mind there was only one answer to these 
questions: "What we are we owe to race and what we do we owe to 
the race also—we are all one." With that conclusion, Stetson 
completed a line of thought that verified the unity of man. In 
doing so, she demonstrated the physical and mental aspects of 
humanity that related one man to the entire race. But to 
demonstrate man's unity was not enough for Stetson, she believed 
that the oneness of humanity was also essential for man's 
continued existence and sought to prove as much.

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26 In the Rhetoric, Aristotle viewed the dialectic as a 
systematic investigation into a question. Although Stetson did 
not examine both sides of the issue under discussion, her use of 
the question and answer technique suggested as much. See The 
Stetson contended that survival of the individual depended upon his association with other members of his race and that racial progress rested upon humanity's recognition of that fact. She brought forth several examples intended to demonstrate the necessity of a unified mankind.

Adapting the material to the audience and occasion, Stetson drew an example from Christian doctrine. She maintained that Christ attempted to reveal to mankind the importance of living and working together. "But we did not understand him then," she said, "and we don't yet." Implicit in that statement was the assumption that Stetson did understand and that she was going to relate that understanding to her audience. In order to do so, she structured her thoughts around the Unitarian belief that God resided in all men, making each man a part of divinity. She connected the accepted belief with her interpretation of Christ's teachings, lending the credibility of the former to the latter. She stated,

He showed to us Divinity in Humanity [sic]—God in man; taught us that to love and serve God was to love and serve mankind—that we were all members of one body—all one in Him.

In another example, Stetson focused upon a self-evident truth. Modern advancements in communication and travel made possible a "world exchange" of information. According to Stetson, "the interchange of human life" was a necessity for the progress of civilization. "It is not that we as individuals are benefitted by this world exchange," she said, "it is that we as individuals could not exist without it." Stetson employed an Aristotelian topos to demonstrate her point. In essence, she argued that
removal of the cause of progress, "world exchange," would eliminate the effect, modern civilized man. She concluded,

Disunite us—if it could be done, destroy the roads and wires that spread our necessities and multiply our intelligence, stop the division of labor and exchange of goods, disintegrate society and reduce it to its component parts—to man as he would be alone—and you have only the inarticulate savage.

Emotional Proofs

In order to put the audience into the proper frame of mind, Stetson relied extensively upon identification techniques. Specifically, she linked her thoughts on the unity of man to established beliefs and values. As it was discussed in logical proofs, Stetson frequently connected her arguments with accepted Unitarian doctrine. She rarely talked explicitly on a particular belief; rather, she called to mind that belief by the mere mention of a word or phrase. For instance, when she referred to God in her sermon, she usually mentioned His loving nature as well as the laws of the universe that He established for humanity to follow. The mere mention of such themes allowed the audience to fill in the remaining ideas. Stetson evoked in the minds of her

27 For a discussion of identification techniques see Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, Speech Criticism, pp. 433-434.

28 Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Visions: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 58 (December, 1972), pp. 398-399. In his article, Bormann stated that a rhetorical vision emerges as a result of a chaining of fantasy themes that the interacting groups have developed. The persuader, then, "simply repeats what the audiences already knows," enabling the audience to fill in the material left out.
audience the belief in a beneficent God who created man in His own image and who established certain laws of the universe that would lead mankind to perfection. She further implied that it was necessary for man to cultivate a Christian character by proper moral conduct— an important component in Unitarian theology. That premise was strongly suggested when she concluded that "man so far has largely failed to observe those laws and that until he does he cannot reach Heaven."

Stetson also appealed to another prevalent belief that existed in the minds of her audience; that is, she evoked images of a perfect society no longer shackled by the sins of competition and selfishness. Nationalists shared in a common desire to rectify social and economic injustices caused by capitalism. They created an elaborate set of fantasy themes that were easily evoked in a Nationalist's mind. In Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, Mr. Barton, a character in the novel, delivered a sermon in which he captured the central spirit of the movement. He was attempting to explain society's transformation from wickedness to utopia. He said,

It is not necessary to suppose a moral new birth of humanity, or a wholesale destruction of the wicked and survival of the good, to account for the fact before us. It finds its simple and obvious explanation in the reaction of a changed environment upon human nature. It means merely that a form of society which was founded on the pseudo self-interest of selfishness, and appealed solely to the anti-social and brutal side of human nature, has

29 For a discussion of the Unitarian belief in the necessity of cultivating a Christian character see Howe, The Unitarian Conscience, pp. 107-116.
been replaced by institutions based on the true self-interest of a rational unselfishness, and appealing to the self-interest of a rational unselfishness, and appealing to the social and generous instincts of men.

Nationalists frequently polarized social and economic issues by using dialectic terms. They related capitalism to such negative terms as irrationality, selfishness, and brutishness; whereas, nationalism suggested rationality, unselfishness, and humanness. Additionally, Nationalists associated their economic plan with the themes of progress and cooperation and capitalism with destruction and isolation. Stetson frequently called to mind these dialectic themes in her sermon. For example, when she spoke of the book, the ship, and the bridge, she stressed that they were "called for by humanity" and not for individual gain, suggesting the progressive spirit of cooperation. On the other hand, capitalism and its emphasis upon competition were directly responsible for individual isolation and governmental corruption.

If we were not as ignorant and shortsighted as we are, we should not have the government blundering for us. And if men were not selfish and cruel and bought with a price--helpless each man of us under the necessity of providing for himself and family on what terms he can--we should not have the government as rotten and purchasable as we see it today.

By appealing to various religious, economic and political themes that existed in the minds of the audience, Stetson identified with the needs, wants, and desires of her audience. As a result, she favorably disposed her audience to the proposition she was advancing in her sermon. In addition, she

intensified the emotional impact of the identification techniques by connecting them to various motive appeals.

Stetson appealed to numerous motives in her sermon; however, she relied upon two in particular: achievement and companionship. Throughout the speech, she stressed the intellectual and technological advancement of man from his primitive to modern state. Man's acquisition of speech, for instance, enabled him to advance civilization in a positive fashion. She strengthened that point when she stated:

Look at what man was when he was most alone, and what he is now that he is most together. See how step by step he has grown and developed in exact proportion with his freedom of communication with his kind.

The appeal to achievement is clear in this statement. By praising the progress of humanity, she also stimulated a desire to work even more conscientiously to continue that growth.

Stetson also appealed to companionship in her desire to stimulate the development of a cooperative spirit in her audience. She restated frequently the positive effects of a unified mankind. The appeal contributed to a sense of oneness: a spirit of brotherhood. When she discussed the unity of man, Stetson used strongly optimistic language. She employed such connotative phrases as "marvellously strong and good," "modern civilized man or woman," "common intelligence," and "common power." These and similar phrases served to link companionship with the positive emotions of wisdom, confidence, and success. On the other hand,

31 These motive appeals are defined in Monroe, Ehninger, and Gronbeck, 9th brief ed., Principles of Speech Communication, p. 242.
she connected individualism with such negative expressions as "inarticulate savage," "weak and bad," and "great evils," just to name a few. As such, she related disunity to the negative emotions of suffering, weakness, and ignorance.

**Ethical Proofs**

Stetson centered attention upon the probity of her character by connecting her message to the virtuous. The virtue of liberality was central to her strategy. According to Aristotle, a liberal person was not obsessed with the "struggle for money." Throughout her sermon, Stetson stressed the selfish nature of the present economic structure. She asked her audience, for example, why an individual should care that others suffer. "I earn my living and rear my family," she responded, "let the world go hang says John Smith, and Vanderbilt goes a little farther and says 'Damn the People.'"

Stetson and her audience, on the other hand, favored the liberal notion of a collective economy. As such, they were both virtuous in their desire to improve the condition of humanity. In addition, Stetson connected the virtue of liberality to that of magnanimity. The Aristotelian concept of the magnanimous focused upon the desire "to produce great benefits." Stetson never let her audience forget that the ultimate goal of humanity was to achieve perfection. She stressed that civilization's progress and

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32 *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p. 47.
33 *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p. 47.
future growth depended upon mankind's united effort. She cautioned her audience, "You can not confine your interests to your self[sic] because your very existence is in common with your kind!"

Stetson strengthened her character by connecting the opposition to the negative concepts of injustice and "meanness of spirit." The enemy in this case was the selfish and insensitive individual. She conceded that mankind had been "ignorant and shortsighted" in allowing the "government to blunder in its leadership"; nevertheless, she suggested that an economy based upon the spirit of competition contributed to governmental corruption and selfish greed.

In a subtle way, Stetson praised the audience, thereby enhancing her own character. She complimented them for their ability to formulate new and great ideas. She asked, "As for great thoughts, is there one of you who has not read great thoughts and recognized them as your own?" She continued with the same delicate line of praise in the next sentence. This time she suggested that the audience was particularly suited for great thoughts. She stated,

Great thoughts—which are neither more no less than the inflowing of the spirit of God—are our common good—only some of us have machinery better fitted to receive and express them!

In a modest and suggestive fashion, Stetson also praised her own self-sacrificing dedication to the life of reform. She pointed out that great reformers endured significant personal hardships in order to work for the well-being of others. In a

34 The Rhetoric of Aristotle, p. 47.
metaphorical way, she heightened this thought: "They [reformers]
do not live much at home—they live in the other people."

In another instance, Stetson complimented her work as speaker
and writer. In doing so, she linked the motives of the orator and
author to the virtues of courage and wisdom. According to

Stetson,

The author or the speaker is the mouthpiece of the spirit
of the age, and it is because the soul of man is crying
within him for new light--new strength that the author and
speaker answer as they do at last with courage and wisdom
and power!

Stetson proved her sagacity by the use of accepted scientific
law, social theory, and Christian doctrine. She demonstrated in
her sermon a thorough understanding of the principles of organic
and social evolution. She showed a firm grasp of and commitment
to utopian socialism, especially nationalism. Finally, she
exhibited a solid understanding of Unitarianism, inferring many of
her conclusions concerning the unity of man from accepted
Unitarian doctrine.

In addition to enhancing her character and sagacity, Stetson
attempted to create good will toward her audience. She identified
with the audience's desire to restore the values of justice and
cooperation to society. She also presented herself as a friend to
the audience. As such, she offered a means by which humanity
could initiate a course of progressive social development. In
essence, she spoke of a "vital truth" that had been ignored for
too long, suppressing the benevolent spirit of humanity. Finally,
she was a messenger of good tidings, a spokeswoman for the truth,
who harbored no hidden ambition or personal greed; rather, she
advocated a plan of action that sought to place mankind on the path of perfection.

Effectiveness

Charlotte Stetson prepared a sermon that was appropriately adapted to the audience. Her allegiance to the principles of nationalism and Unitarianism almost assured the success of the address. Immediate audience response to the sermon indicated as much. In fact, audiences' responded favorably to all four sermons. In her diary, Stetson recorded that the first sermon "was well received." She was encouraged by the response and indicated as much when she wrote: "They want more." In a similar fashion, she felt that "The Unity of Man" was successful. She wrote that the audience "seemed pleased." Furthermore, Stetson was encouraged by the increase in attendance for her second sermon.

Other sources supported Stetson's evaluation of audience response. Accounts of her sermons indicated modest success. Her sermons were described as "clear" as well as "interesting and able." More importantly, the accounts pointed to Stetson's growing image as a speaker and social philosopher. According to one account, "The lecture was listened to with much appreciation

35 Diary, 6 December 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
37 Diary, 13 December 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
38 See unidentified newsclippings "Mrs. Stetson in Action" in AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 286.
and the clever lady is certainly making herself known as a fine speaker and deep thinker."  

More important than immediate audience response was the fact that Stetson was establishing herself as a "fine speaker and deep thinker." In fact, several months prior to the sermons in Hamilton Hall, Stetson secured the services of a manager to arrange speaking engagements.  

After her four sermons, Stetson found herself increasingly involved in a network of religious, social, political, and intellectual associations.  

On January 20, 1892, Stetson appeared at the First Congregational Church. There she delivered her sermon on "The Relation of Economic to Moral Reform." Judging by Stetson's reaction to it, the sermon was "a real success." Other accounts corroborated her assessment. As one observer commented, "She is possessed of rare enunciative powers, making herself distinctly heard all over the hall, and as she proceeded with her subject, grew fairly eloquent."  

Much to her delight, the opportunity to preside over a regular church service came only months after her Hamilton Hall 

39 From unidentified newsclipping entitled "Conscientious Action" in AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 286.  

40 See Diary, 22 March 1891 and 16 April 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.  


43 This quotation comes from a newsclipping (source unknown) entitled "Mrs. Stetson's Lecture" located in AESL MS., newsclippings, fol. 286.
engagement. She was invited to conduct the regular service at the
Universalist Church of Oakland, California. "I did the whole
ting, and enjoyed it," she observed. Additionally, she felt
that the audience was pleased with her thoughts on the nature of
the human race.

With the start of 1892, Stetson also found herself
increasingly active in social and political circles. She was
completing at this time her lectures on domestic sociology, which
she gave to three classes in the Bay area. Moreover, she divided
her time and talent among a variety of groups which included the
Ebell Society (an ethical society), The Woman's Alliance, The
Economic Club, and The State Council of Women as well as the New
Nation Club and the PCWPA.

Stetson also involved herself in Oakland city politics. In
particular, she associated herself with the Populist Party there.
The People's Party sought reforms in the areas of education,
utilities, railroads, and sanitation. Stetson wrote planks for

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44 Stetson's manuscript for the sermon she delivered at the
Universalist Church is located in her manuscript collection. See
Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Our Humanity," AESL MS., unpublished
sermons, fol. 168.

45 Diary, 13 March 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.

46 Diary, 13 March 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.

47 For material concerning these class lectures see Diary,
October 1891-February 1892, AESL MS., vols. 30 and 31.

48 "Thoughts and Figgerings," AESL MS., fol. 16.

49 Stetson outlines some of the People's Party ideology in a
speech delivered at a local ward rally. See Charlotte Perkins
Stetson, "Address for Ward Meeting," AESL MS., unpublished
lectures, fol. 170.
the party's platform in addition to speaking at its meetings. As part of the grassroots movement, she found herself in smoke-filled rooms above saloons speaking to mixed audiences that ranged from "babies to greybeards." More importantly, she made contacts with other left-wing activists working in the Bay area. Among her new contacts were an assortment of writers and intellectuals that included Ina Coolbrith, Edwin Markham, and Hamlin Garland. She also caught the attention of David Starr Jordan of Stanford University, a leading liberal intellectual in his own right. Jordan liked Stetson's poetry and indicated his intentions to use some of it in his lectures on evolution. Furthermore, he indicated that other faculty members were interested in her work and wished to become more acquainted with her.

As a result of such contacts, Stetson began to expand her lecture career and reform reputation. She was, for instance, invited to speak at the Congress of Churches meeting during the World's Fair of 1893. She participated in the Woman's Congresses of 1895 and 1896 which attracted feminists, suffragists, and woman's advocates of local and national fame.

50 Diary, 16 December 1891, AESL MS., vol. 30.
51 Diary 16 January 1893, AESL MS., vol. 32.
52 Letter from David Starr Jordan to Charlotte Perkins Stetson, 12 February 1892, AESL MS., fol. 137.
53 The Living, pp. 232-233.
54 For more information concerning these congresses see the brochures found in AESL MS., fol. 4.
editorship of *The Bulletin*, later called *The Impress*, the official journal of the Women's Press Association. By 1896 Stetson was a national and international lecturer. She attended the twenty-eighth convention of the Women's Suffrage Association held in Washington, D.C., stayed with Jane Addams in Hull House of Chicago, and travelled overseas to attend the International Socialist and Labor Congress. Yet, prior to her emergence as a nationally and internationally noted lecturer and social philosopher, she had to settle for small audiences, mostly clubs and organizations, to spread her message of progress. Another such opportunity came when a surge of interest in Robert Browning spread across the Atlantic to the United States.

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55 Hill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, p. 259.
Chapter VIII

"Poetry and Life"

While living in Oakland, California, Charlotte Stetson addressed women's clubs, Nationalist clubs, and ethical societies. In the spring of 1892, however, she had the opportunity to address a literary society. At this time, a wave of interest in the poetry of Robert Browning was spreading across the country bringing with it the formation of Browning clubs. Stetson was invited to address one such group. She seized the opportunity, looking upon it as another chance to spread her gospel of progress. This chapter examines her first Browning lecture entitled "Poetry and Life."¹

Background

Browning Societies

In the nineteenth century, societies bearing the names of great literary figures were quite common. Groups met to discuss the works of men like Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and William Wordsworth. Not to be outdone, admirers of Robert Browning established a society of their own.

Dr. Frederick James Furnivall—lawyer, social worker, scholar of Early English, and teacher at the Working Men's College—was the principal organizer of the first Browning society. In 1881, he and Miss E. H. Hickey formally established the London Browning Society. The founders hoped that their new organization would generate greater interest in the works of Robert Browning; that it would disseminate information about the poet and his work; and that it would spark critical interest among literary scholars.

Although the London Society was the best known of the Browning clubs, it lasted only twelve years, dissolving in 1892. However, during that time it accomplished several of its goals. The Society published volumes of Browning's personal papers; it circulated critical essays on his poetry; and it printed biographical material that made information about his life more accessible to the reading public. Also, the Society inspired other local groups to form clubs throughout England. That influence crossed the Atlantic as well, where interest in Browning

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caught the fancy of Americans. In fact, the movement there outlived the London Society by many years.\(^5\)

By 1885, Browning societies began appearing in major cities across the United States. In that year was founded the Boston Browning Society. Not long after that Philadelphia and Chicago sported clubs.\(^6\) Interest in the poetry of Browning extended throughout the country and with that excitement came other societies. A Browning biographer noted the widespread appeal of the poet in America:

> Letters received from often remote parts of the United States had been for many years a detail of his daily experience [Robert Browning]; and even when they consisted of the request for an autograph, an application to print selections from his works, or mere expression of schoolboy pertness or schoolgirl sentimentality they bore witness to his wide reputation in that country, and high esteem in which he was held there.\(^7\)

Conditions in nineteenth-century America were well suited to the growth of literary societies. America was undergoing a period of popular education which stimulated interest in cultural and intellectual matters. The Lyceum, professional lecture bureaus, and the Chautauqua constituted a vast system of education and entertainment for millions of Americans. From 1875 to 1900, for example, the number of lecture bureaus grew from one to one

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\(^5\) In 1964, for example, there were fourteen Browning societies still active in the United States. See Edward J. McAleer, Learned Lady (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 122.


\(^7\) Orr, p. 333.
hundred. Agents were engaging singers, actors, writers, and preachers to lecture on such subjects as travel, science, politics, social reform, labor, art, and education. The Chautauqua experienced similar growth. In 1898 there were forty-five centers, where an estimated 1,200,000 persons listened to more than 2,000 lectures in one year.

A major reason for Browning's popularity in America was the applicability of his poetry to several philosophical and scientific issues of the day. For example, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution generated much controversy among intellectuals and scientists over its role in the development of society. On the one side, social Darwinists opposed any interference with man's natural struggle for existence. Competition and survival of the fittest were key elements in their deterministic approach to social progress. In his poetry, Browning celebrated the work ethic, linking individual success to perseverance. Social Darwinists could easily interpret Browning's affirmation of hard work as artistic verification of their belief in the survival of the fittest. According to critics Houghton and Stange,

Browning's ethic of aspiration could easily be vulgarized into glorification of a competitive society; his conception of love could make sexual passion respectable by calling it spiritual inspiration.

On the other hand, social reformers, Social Gospel advocates, and utopian socialists could find similar confirmation for their

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philosophy of human benevolence in Browning's poetry. A modern critic noted the optimism found in his poetry: "Here is the voice of dynamic progress, a trumpet call to forging ahead in the strenuous pursuit of impossible ideals."\footnote{10}

For Charlotte Stetson, the American Browning club movement meant additional opportunity to spread her gospel of human progress and perfection. The invitation to address a Browning club came as a result of another, unrelated lecture. After listening to Stetson's address on "The Mothers of the Race," a member of a local Browning club invited her to lecture at one of its meetings.\footnote{11}

Several factors moved Stetson to accept the speaking engagement. Certainly, she found Browning's optimism quite attractive and supportive of her own thoughts on progress. Consequently, she was able to extract themes from his poetry and use them to illustrate her ideas on social growth. Personal reasons also entered into the decision. Stetson's lecture career was still in its formative stages and her income from it was minimal. Thus, the opportunity to earn additional money, even if it was only five dollars, was attractive, especially when family expenses were taxing the budget.\footnote{12}

Although fees earned from the lectures helped to pay living expenses, the chance to work was even more important to Stetson.

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\footnote{11} Diary, 9 February 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.

\footnote{12} Diary, 31 October 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.
At the time that she gave the lectures her home life was exceedingly difficult. The rigors of running a boarding house, the prospects of divorce, and the care of sick family members were exerting tremendous pressure upon her mental and physical well-being. Fortunately, Stetson found relief from such pressure in her work, especially lecturing and writing. They enabled her to cope with personal problems and to look somewhat optimistically to the future. As she wrote in her diary: "Am feeling first rate these days—full of plans to write, sew, build, etc. The creative instinct rising and promising well for work when the strain is off."\(^\text{13}\)

According to her journal notes and lecture manuscripts, Stetson gave at least four Browning club lectures. The first three dealt specifically with Browning's poetry while the fourth was on "The Woman Question."\(^\text{14}\) In the first lecture, "Poetry and Life," Stetson established several themes concerning poetry that were important in later lectures. They included the divine inspiration of great poets, the poets's ability to discern truths, and the application of those truths to human behavior.

As to the latter, she actually entitled her second speech "Applied Browning."\(^\text{15}\) In it, she focused upon the poem "The Statue and the Bust." She felt that it had one important lesson: that mankind could make human existence noble. In order to

\(^\text{13}\) Diary, 25 October 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.

\(^\text{14}\) Stetson mentions the lecture on "The Woman Question" in her Diary, 1 October 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.

achieve greater nobility, man must do more than just appreciate poetry; he must seek to discover new insights into the human experience from verse and then connect that knowledge to human activity. As she put it: "The primal thought in my application is this: No experience is of use to us save as it affects us."\(^{16}\)

In her lecture "On Robert Browning's Belief in the Supremacy of Love," Stetson challenged the poet's preoccupation with passionate love. She felt that passion was merely selfishness and neglected the true nature of love—to give.\(^{17}\) She said, "Love is an outflowing of the great waters of divinity within us, passion the need of the thirsty soul which has not enough for itself."\(^{18}\) Furthermore, passion contributed little to one's preparation for heaven or the progress of humanity; on the other hand, the love of mankind enhanced the quality of life for all of humanity and moved society forward.

**Setting**

As she did in her domestic sociology talks, Stetson gave her Browning lectures in the privacy of a parlor. She delivered "Poetry and Life" in the home of Mrs. Burns on the afternoon of February 15, 1892.\(^{19}\) Such an intimate and private setting

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19 It is not clear where Mrs. Burns' home was located. In her journal, Stetson simply writes "City." Probably she was referring to San Francisco. Diary, 15 February 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.
certainly enhanced the friendly and supportive atmosphere of the occasion. On this particular day, Stetson spoke for approximately thirty minutes, reading from a prepared manuscript. Considering the nature of the Browning club, it was likely that an informal discussion followed her lecture as well.

As a rule, Browning clubs were formed in order to promote greater understanding of—and to exchange ideas on—the poetry of Robert Browning. At any given meeting, a club might focus in on a particularly difficult passage of an obscure Browning poem; it might seek to discover some universal truth as to proper human conduct; or it might simply admire the quality of his style. Regardless of the specific purpose, members gathered to revel in mutual admiration of their namesake. As such, the occasions were largely ceremonial ones; that is, the quality of the experience was just as important as the information shared at the meetings.

Audience

Browning societies drew their membership from many different segments of American society. Clergymen, college professors, housewives and working men joined in on the wave of excitement. For example, a Unitarian minister, the Reverend Jenkin Lloyd Jones, was instrumental in founding the Chicago Browning Society. Also, Hiram Corson, Professor of English at Cornell University,

20 Stetson indicated that she read the lecture in her Diary, 15 February 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.

21 Greer, Browning and America, pp. 175-179.
gained recognition for his oral renditions of Browning's poetry. Motives for joining a club were just as diverse as its membership. Naturally, there were those individuals who were truly interested in and serious students of Robert Browning. However, some joined clubs in order to convey an image of refinement or elitism. Still others found inspiration in the spirituality and moral optimism of his verse. Unfortunately, there were also those who associated with a society so as to exhibit a pretentious love of art. Stetson was aware of these motives and even referred to some of them in her lecture. For instance, she praised the audience for their genuine interest in poetry and warned against becoming pretentious or elitist in their perception of themselves. Also, she recognized club members' interest in the moral messages of Browning. Also, she talked at length upon the message of progress in his verse.

The size of the audience that came to hear Stetson on that particular Saturday afternoon is not known. However, since the lecture was given in a private residence, the group was probably small, ranging anywhere from five to twenty members. The composition of the audience was similar to that of her domestic sociology classes; that is, the group consisted of middle-class, urban housewives who lived in and around the San Francisco Bay area. For this group, Stetson prepared a speech that integrated

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22 Greer, pp. 165-168.
23 Greer, pp. 170-179.
her ideas on the poetry of Robert Browning with her thoughts on human progress.24

Structural Elements

The Introduction

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle wrote that the proem of an epideictic speech should give praise or blame, communicate a thesis, and prepare the audience for what follows in the rest of the address.25 Stetson satisfied these basic goals in the opening remarks of "Poetry and Life."26

She began the speech with a statement intended to capture the attention of—and to establish identification with—the audience. She used the attention-getting device of the familiar to arouse interest and to heighten speaker-audience identification, which can be seen by her use of such techniques as the use of the pronoun *we* and her stressing their mutual interest in the subjects of the lecture: "These [poetry and life] of which I am here to speak to you are things we all know by name."

Also, Stetson magnified the listeners' image of her by praising their expertise in poetry. Especially, she acknowledged

24 The writer inferred from statements made by Stetson in her Browning lectures that the audience was predominantly, if not totally, female. For example, in "Applied Browning," she used the pronoun "we" frequently with its referent being women. See, "Applied Browning," AESL MS., fol. 168.


26 Hereafter all references to or citations from the speech are from Charlotte Perkins Stetson, "Poetry and Life," AESL MS., unpublished lectures, fol. 168.
that such proficiency would help them to understand the more
difficult subject of human life. Such commendation and expression
of confidence helped to establish rapport between Stetson and her
listeners. She said, "In addressing this club I count on the
years you have given to the study of poetry to enable you to
understand our other subject better--Life [sic]."

In the very next sentence, she continued her praise of the
audience, recognizing their above average intelligence and
aesthetic sensibility. While doing so, she also indicated that
such qualities would enable her to speak candidly and
intelligently about poetry and its relationship to human life,
adding the elements of straightforwardness and sincerity
to her image: "And counting on that understanding I can speak
more deeply and more freely than to an audience from whom I could
expect only the average acquaintance with the greatest art.

Stetson made it very clear that the subjects of her lecture
were poetry and life. However, through implication, she indicated
that her primary focus was upon the latter. Particularly, she
hoped to demonstrate how poetry might enhance the progress of
human life. As she stated, "To judge the height of anything you
must have some standard to measure by; and in rating human acts,
or human virtues, or any human thing, I take for a standard Human
Life [sic]."

The Body

Stetson arranged the major points of her speech in a
distributive pattern of organization, grouping ideas under the
general headings of human life and poetry. Reinforcing its importance, she chose to discuss human life first. In fact, she devoted a major portion of the lecture to it. By doing so, Stetson was able to establish early the principle of human action and to demonstrate its relationship to human progress. With those concepts firmly set in place, she could then show her listeners how poetry functioned in that growth.

In her discussion of human life, Stetson arranged her subordinate points in a logical pattern, moving from the general to the specific. First, she set forth those elements shared by all members of the animal kingdom. Accordingly, material structure (atomic and molecular structures) and biological needs (eating, drinking, sleeping, etc.) were basic to every animal. However, she maintained that man's spiritual nature made him human and distinguished him from other animals. "The Human Being [sic] is a spirit," she stated, "who lives in an animal." As such, man could transcend mere physical life and share in "the universal life" by his unique capability of expression. Obviously, Stetson was referring specifically to poetry here but chose to withhold stating as much in order to heighten interest.

Secondly, she pointed out that, unlike other animals, man could gaze into the spiritual world and relate that experience to others through art: "When an individual felt most strongly the pressure of the divinity he expresses it individually in what we call Art [sic]." More importantly, as a creative form of expression, art distinguished man from animal. According to Stetson, "The animal is his own ultimate expression—he cannot do, he can only be."
On the other hand, she felt that man could effect change through art:

But with us, when one longs to please another he can do so not only by performing feats of skill and agility with both body and brain, and slowly improving his personal appearance; but by making things[sic]. This is the human distinction.

Lastly, Stetson turned her attention to the art of poetry. Having just established the divine nature of art, she focused specifically upon the poet: "And of all artists, the Poet[sic], by his wondrous vehicle of language mixed with music, has most power as the voice of God." In view of the audience and occasion, such magnification of poetry and the poet was appropriate. In fact, she heightened even more the emotional celebration by including Robert Browning in that special group of sensitive poets.

In the second main point, Stetson made the connection between human life and poetry. She wanted to make it clear that human growth was contingent upon human action. In developing this concept, she discussed a number of laws that governed human progress. On the one hand, there was the law of habit; it held that any action became easier and more skillful through the force of repetition. "So the poet," she stated, "if he constantly trys[sic] to express . . . gradually increases both his will and his ability--becomes even a greater poet." On the other hand, a skill left unused would eventually be lost, a victim of the law of disuse. Thus, she urged her listeners to listen to the words of the poet, the voice of God, and use them to guide their behavior. As she stated, "The poet furnished the stimulus, made the deed possible, but the man must do it."
The Conclusion

In the conclusion, Stetson evoked the emotion of shame in an effort to stimulate listeners into using their interest in poetry to better human life. She reiterated for a last time the idea that poetry, as a form of creative expression, provided insight into proper human conduct. The power of poetry rested in its capacity to excite thought. Unfortunately, she maintained that mankind had failed to act upon those ideas generated by the poet, thereby allowing for social imperfections to flourish.

For example, she thought it "gastly" [sic] and "ridiculous" that certain paradoxes were allowed to exist. Stetson firmly believed in human perfection and felt it shameful that churches and prisons should coexist. Furthermore, it was a discredit to humanity that an army of peace, the Red Cross, should owe its existence to war.

While arousing shame, Stetson was cautious in laying blame for such paradoxes. Instead of pointing directly to the audience or some other identifiable group, she chose to travel back untold centuries to identify the source. Those conditions that she labelled as human paradoxes began the first time an individual admitted to having a feeling or thought and declined to act upon it. Obviously, everyone in the audience could remember similar circumstances in his or her own past in order to identify with the problem; yet the problem was vague enough not to pinpoint anyone in particular and thus excite antagonism rather than shame.
However, Stetson did not leave her audience to wallow in shame. In fact, she ended her speech on a note of optimism. Keeping in line with the nature of the occasion, she magnified the power and impact of Robert Browning by labelling him a "Seer" and "Teacher." Additionally, she amplified the importance of the Browning club, suggesting that such an organization could significantly influence human progress. She said,

How can we best learn to lay hold of the light and strength these great men [poets] bring us, and make them ours, our own, parts of our very lives?

That it seems to me should be the effort of our study of Poetry and Life.

Forms of Proof

Logical Proofs

As previously mentioned, the principal aim of the ceremonal address is praise or blame. The audience and speaker join in mutual celebration of purpose and subject. Consequently, reasoned discourse normally gives way to emotional appeals. As one source notes, "Traditionally, emotional appeal has been associated with the ceremonial address, those which commemorate great events and eulogize great personalities." Indeed, Stetson heightened the subject of poetry, especially the work of Robert Browning. Yet underneath all the praise was a clear line of argument. Specifically, Stetson argued that racial progress should be the ultimate standard of human action. This claim was dogma in

27 Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, Speech Criticism, p. 438.
Stetson's theory of social progress. Choosing to advance it in a ceremonial setting only confirmed its significance to the speaker.

In an effort to establish this claim, she first argued from degrees, contending that poetry was the greatest of arts. She did so by using several definitions which became logical links in her chain of thought.

First, she defined the term "human being." Her definition was straightforward and sensible. Accordingly, she maintained that each living being was the combined product of physical, mental, and spiritual qualities. Secondly, she defined human life:

This perfect development of that most wonderful animal form on earth—the equally perfect development of that subtle dominant organ—the human brain; and the orderly fulfillment of those laws of life which tend to our racial growth—this is human life.

Also, Stetson added a personal note to the definition. She claimed that human life approximated the divine when an individual received impressions through other than bodily senses. She was suggesting here that man's capacity to formulate ideas and use them to influence others was the greatest of human powers. In essence, she implied that inspired thought led the race forward.

Thirdly, she defined the nature of art as she perceived it. She said,

Art you know is only a way of doing things, a form of creation, passing beyond all laws of material structure, having for its first condition, its medium of existence—the human mind.

Essentially, she implied that art was the product of personal cognition and not bound by material or other physical stimulation.
The last link in her chain of definitions sought to establish poetry as the greatest of arts. She did so in a way consistent with and dependent upon the just mentioned definitions. She maintained that poetry, as the voice of God, inspired great thought and affected deeply its reader. She said of the poet: "He spreads wider, he strikes deeper, he lasts longer, than any other artist." Capitalizing upon the audience's love of Browning, she used him to exemplify the greatness of poetry:

So Browning in his wonderful art uses words in such [ways] that instead of his expressing the thought and our taking it from him, he produces an effect upon the brain which causes it to do its own thinking--to produce for itself in vital freshness the image or feeling he sought to convey.

Having established the divine inspiration of the poet and having stressed his insight into the operation of the universe, Stetson formulated a conclusion that naturally followed from these two premises. She claimed that feeding the brain with the thoughts of a poet was not enough for man to grow; he had to act upon them. She buttressed that point with the Stetsonian doctrine of use and disuse: a law extracted from her understanding of the principles of social evolution. According to Stetson,

Here you stand face to face with nature--inexorable, changeless, everlasting. This is no manmade god to punish or forgive--this is the real God that made the world and set his laws to govern it. And the law says to the human animal as to all others--use and have--disuse and lose!

In the final analysis, Stetson was urging her listeners to act upon those thoughts evoked in their minds by the great poets lest the poets lose their gift and humanity lose its capacity to receive such impressions. As she succinctly put it: "Unless we use the powers we have, we lose them."
Stetson’s effort to prove that poetry is the greatest of arts was appropriate for the audience, occasion, and speaker. Stressing the importance of poetry, especially that of Robert Browning, was certainly felicitous within the context of a Browning club meeting. Her analysis was also consistent with nineteenth-century criticism of Browning and other Victorian poets. According to Houghton and Stange in *Victorian Poetry and Poetics*, critics, writers, and the general public "bestowed on the poet the role of prophet, and paid excessive tribute to his power for social good."\(^2\) In an age of scientific functionalism, Victorian poets often attempted to illuminate for their readers the functional application of poetry. In their discussion of Browning’s poem "Fra Lippo Lippi," Houghton and Stange exemplify this point of view:

> But Browning seems to be suggesting in this poem that spiritual elevation results from a living immersion in the life available to us, and that it is the artist’s function to ennoble men by leading them to see and to live more fully.\(^3\)

Lastly, the claim was consistent with Stetson’s undying quest to effect social perfection. If any theme united her numerous lectures given under a variety of circumstances, it was racial progress. Stetson took advantage of every available opportunity to advance the theme and did so in "Poetry and Life."

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29 Houghton and Stange, p. 167.
Emotional Proofs

Consistent with the aims of epideictic oratory, Stetson used the technique of praise to heighten the emotional intensity of the audience. First, she chose to connect human life to the noble: that which is desirable and good. She strengthened her audience's faith in the dignity and superiority of human life by stressing its divine nature. Unlike other animals, humans possessed a small part of God in the form of the soul.

Reflecting a sense of optimism, she spoke confidently of human perfection. If the body, mind, and soul of every human were developed fully and equally, then perfection was inevitable. Such idealism carried with it the virtues of magnanimity and liberality, exciting images of cooperation, unselfishness, and equality.

Stetson's belief in the potential perfectibility of mankind fit nicely into nineteenth-century Victorian poetics. Poets of the period often conveyed such themes as moral optimism, the spirituality of man, and the spirit of cooperation. Stetson's inclusion of human perfection and the nobility of life certainly amplified both the value of human existence and the vital contribution that art played in perfection.

Secondly, Stetson praised the poetry of Browning. Her laudatory comments magnified the audience's already favorable disposition toward the poet and his works. In describing his work, she labelled it as "wonderful," "exquisite and powerful," and "the noblest." Moreover, it was simple and suggestive; that

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30 Houghton and Stange, p. xxii.
is, his poetry generated implicit messages in the minds of readers by the use of analogy. She amplified the point with an analogy of her own. Drawing upon her artistic background, she discussed complementary colors. "To brighten your red by putting green beside it," she said, "is a pleasanter [sic] and more powerful method than to simply strengthen the red." As for Browning's poetry, she added,

But where the distinctive delight of this man's words over another comes in is in his planting in our feeble or jaded minds a thought by analogy and suggestion rather than by direct conveyance.

In addition, she stressed the noble nature and goodness of the Browning club and its membership. She intensified the bond that united them by praising their sincere and honest interest in poetry. She attacked those "cultured few" who used art as a symbol of refinement; she chided those who were "besotted" in the worship of style only; and she assailed those who spent endless hours in search of the obscure in poetry. By implication, then, Stetson was acknowledging the fact that present members were not guilty of such affectation and pretentiousness. Instead, they were sincerely interested in understanding Robert Browning's poetry and using that knowledge for the betterment of humanity.

Nearing the end of her speech, Stetson used a hypothetical example to strengthen her listeners' appreciation of the poet and to intensify the importance of the club. She posed a situation where two persons, a poet and non-poet, were stranded upon some deserted island. She asked, "What value was the poet to him [the non-poet]?" She explained that the poet's ability to see and
express truths would greatly benefit the other person. "The poet sees and shows us truths," she stated, "which, if we act on them, lift us and strengthen us."

Specifically, the non-artist would grow intellectually and emotionally from his contact with the poet. Said Stetson:

He receives, through the medium of the poet's brain and words, what his own brain was unfitted to perceive—with delight he experiences the sensation of grasping a new thought—a new feeling.

In a way, the non-poet lost on the island symbolized the membership of the Browning club. Just like the man who grew emotionally and intellectually from the mere presence of the poet, so too would the members of the club grow as they shared their thoughts and ideas on the poetry of Browning. Thus, Stetson intensified the group's camaraderie and strengthened its commitment to the study of poetry.

In summary, Stetson's emotional proofs focused upon the amplification of several themes: the dignity of human life, human perfection, Robert Browning, and the Browning club. While magnifying these topics, especially through the use of analogy and example, she also connected them to the virtues of magnanimity, liberality, and beneficence. Yet her emotional appeals served another function: they contributed in a significant way to the development of her ethical appeals.

Ethical Proofs

In order to focus attention upon the probity of her character, Stetson connected her discussion of human life and
poetry to the virtuous. Repeatedly, she associated human life to the virtue of magnificence; that is, she elevated humanity to a position superior to all other life forms by stressing mankind's potential for perfection. At the same time, she made it clear that it would be wise and prudent to begin immediately to live in such a manner as to initiate a course of progressive human growth.

She also linked poetry to the virtue of magnificence. Elevating poetry to the highest of art forms, she spoke of its divine revelation and universality. Additionally, poetry held an important key to unlocking racial growth. Within poetry mankind could discover the truths of the universe and from them lay prudent plans for happiness. As she stated, "All that we feel and think, yes and do--is of value only as it reacts on our nature, as it permanently betters the race."

Stetson further established the probity of her character by scolding those who were not genuine in their appreciation of art. As she pointed out, some individuals falsely held to the theory of "Art for Art's Sake"; others viewed art as a symbol of refinement; and still others labored relentlessly to discover hidden meanings in art. Such attitudes were improper, felt Stetson, and indicated that those who adhered to them were selfish, imprudent, and shabby in spirit.

In addition to character, Stetson proved her sagacity in "Poetry and Life." She demonstrated a broad familiarity with the popular and controversial subject of evolution. As in other lectures, she talked authoritatively about the laws of the universe, stressing their part in the upward growth of society.
Her example of the two marooned men, for instance, showed clearly the impact of the law of use and disuse upon the poet and his partner.

Furthermore, she used the language of evolution to help convey her expertise. By using such words and phrases as "structural laws," "primeval savage," "subhuman animals," and "lower species," she heightened not only the scientific tone of the speech, but also illustrated man's evolutionary progress in relation to other life forms.

She balanced her discussion of evolution, however, with material pertaining to man's spirituality. Displaying a sensitivity to the liberal-Christian view of evolution, she suggested that God had made it possible for man to perfect himself and his society. Stetson's accommodation of science and religion confirmed her wisdom by conveying such qualities as open-mindedness, rationality, and fairness.

Stetson also established sagacity by showing appreciation for the classic poets. For example, she mourned the passing of Aeschylus and Homer as popular poets. In their places were the likes of Will Carleton, Eugene Field, and James Whitcomb Riley—nineteenth-century popular writers. 31

31 Will Carleton (1845-1912) was best known for the following collections of sentimental literature: Farm Ballads (1873), Farm Legends (1875), and City Ballads (1885). Eugene Field (1850-95), writer for the Denver Tribune and Chicago Daily News, was best known for his "Little Boy Blue" and the "Dutch Lullaby." Lastly, James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916), an Indiana poet and journalist, wrote a number of poems in rustic dialect. His most popular poems were "Little Orphant Annie," "The Man and Jim," and "Knee-Deep in June."
As she observed, "Our life being shallow, trivial, ignoble, it is not to be expected that our poetry be deep, earnest, noble--our popular poetry that is."

Stetson established good will toward her audience as well. She identified herself with the audience's appreciation of Robert Browning by placing him alongside the likes of Homer and Aeschylus and by labelling his poetry as "vital," "divine," and "clear." Such praise was neither convenient nor hollow; rather it reflected Stetson's sincere appreciation for Browning's ability to excite emotion and stimulate thought. However, she was also willing to comment negatively upon his verse when it was appropriate. For example, in a later lecture, she took exception to Browning's preoccupation with the subject of love between man and woman. She explained, "The Love of God and the Love of Mankind [sic] are far greater, nobler, more important and useful factors in life than the love of man for woman."

Stetson presented herself as a friend and a supporter of Browning clubs. She magnified the significance of the club as it pertained to the welfare of humanity. Specifically, she elevated the club's mission from one of simple literary appreciation to that of vital contributor to the progress of humanity. According to Stetson, "The use of Poetry is to raise Life [sic]. Unless we raise our lives to the level of our poetry we have no business with it--it does us harm rather than good."

Lastly, she strengthened her rapport with the audience by demonstrating sincerity in her exaltation of poetry. Stetson could have easily praised endlessly the magnificence of poetry, especially that of Robert Browning. Instead, she conveyed a genuineness in the belief that poetry could enhance human perfection. She enjoyed poetry because it offered insight into human life. As such, she reflected a spirit of inquisitiveness, a sense of benevolence, and confidence in the potential of humanity.

Effectiveness

Although not profuse, there exists sufficient evidence to draw conclusions concerning the effectiveness of Stetson's address to the Browning club. Local meetings of literary groups were not particularly newsworthy nor were their proceedings carefully recorded. Consequently, little primary material remains of this Bay area club, except for Stetson's journal entries and lecture manuscripts.

A number of circumstances surrounding Stetson's lecture to the group made failure unlikely, however. For one thing, Stetson and her audience had a stable foundation from which to build a cohesive relationship. Their mutual admiration for Browning and his poetry united them emotionally and intellectually. Also, Stetson had a number of friends in the audience, strengthening even more that speaker-listener bond.

Among those friends was Mrs. Burns, who became a friend of Stetson while attending her domestic sociology lectures. Additionally, Stetson mentioned in her journal having lunch with
one of the club members, describing the occasion as "Very
Pleasant." Thus, sharing special interest with the audience and
having friends in the room certainly enhanced the likelihood of
success.

Still, Stetson contributed to her own success by preparing a
speech that met effectively the expectations of the audience and
the requirements of the occasion. Her audience obviously expected
material on Robert Browning and his poetry. Stetson did not
disappoint them. In fact, she talked glowingly of Browning,
ranking him among the greatest of poets. Keeping in line with the
purpose of Browning clubs, she read from his poems and made criti-
cal comments concerning their meaning. For instance, in "Poetry
and Life," she commented upon the implicit meaning found in
"Memorabilia." In another lecture, she discussed the theme of
human nobility as it appeared in "The Statue and the Bust." And
on still another occasion, she read several poems that exemplified
Browning's treatment of love. They were "Evelyn Hope," "Love
Among the Ruins," "Dir Aliter Visum," and "Christina."

Other evidence indicated that the audience responded
favorably to the lecture. Stetson was honest and straightforward
when she assessed her own lectures. If she felt a speech was
ill-conceived or poorly received by the audience, she would
usually state so in her diary or journal. She assessed "Poetry

33 Diary, 28 September 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.
168.
and Life" as a "strong paper," reflecting her satisfaction with it. Additionally, she felt that the listeners reacted favorably to it. "They seemed well impressed," she wrote. Moreover, the fact that the club invited her back for additional lectures corroborates Stetson's favorable assessment of the speech's impact upon the listeners.

The immediate impact of Stetson's lecture was emotional bonding between the speaker and listener as they rejoiced together in mutual admiration of Robert Browning. Stetson and club members shared ideas and gained new insights as they explored his poetry, heightening the feelings of camaraderie.

As for long-term impact, the lecture alone produced little, if any, lasting social change, save for continuing Browning's popularity in America. Yet, taken together, her lectures to the club were significant in another way: they joined with her sermons, Nationalist speeches, women's club addresses, and domestic sociology lectures to complete her apprenticeship as a lecturer and social reformer. Art became the last entry into her repertoire of topics that already included religion, sociology, and womanhood.

Following her lectures to the Browning club, Stetson gave other lectures on the role of art in the progress of humanity. In April of 1894, for instance, she delivered a lecture at Stanford

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36 Diary, 15 February 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.
37 Diary, 15 February 1892, AESL MS., vol. 31.
University entitled "Art for Art's Sake." The germinal idea for that address can be traced directly back to "Poetry and Life." She told the university audience that art for art's sake was an unfortunate truism that neglected the most important function of art—the development of man. As she did in her address to the club, she spoke of the poet's gift to perceive truth and communicate it in poetry. She explained, "The artist is one who is larger—one more advanced in development—one who sees what the other cannot see."  

Similarly, she prepared a lecture on "The Spirit of the Furies" in which she spoke optimistically of man's growing awareness of universal brotherhood. The spirit she alluded to was a new found faith in the dignity of human life. That same theme appeared in another lecture entitled "Shaw, Wells, and Humanity." As a regular installment in her lecture repertoire, she discussed human life and its future as presented in the works of George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. Thus, the Browning lectures provided Stetson an opportunity to develop and to refine her thoughts on art and human progress.

41 Unfortunately, there exists no manuscript of this lecture. However, a precis of it can be found in a press release in her collection of papers. See "Some New Lectures by Charlotte Perkins Gilman," AESL MS., fol. 10.
In the final analysis, Stetson's lectures to the Browning club were yet another opportunity to preach her gospel of social progress. Although the subject matter of her lectures was concerned with the art of poetry, her message echoed a familiar sentiment: human perfection depended upon a united effort by man and woman to inject a new spirit of cooperation and benevolence into the mainstream of nineteenth-century American society.
Chapter IX

Conclusions

Charlotte Stetson certainly deserved the designation apostle of progress. For nearly twenty-five years she preached the gospel of social progress and human perfection, spreading her message of hope throughout America and Europe. By the age of thirty-five, she was a skilled veteran of the lecture platform, joining the likes of William Jennings Bryan, Russell Conwell, and Julia Ward Howe. Her speaking skills were the product of experience. She matured as a platform speaker and refined her reform ideology in her Sunday school talks, sermons, class lectures, and club speeches of the early 1880's and early 1890's.

She learned about life through experience. Through her mother she witnessed the realities of nineteenth-century womanhood. Domestic duties, motherhood, and marriage were demanding, time-consuming jobs that contradicted their Victorian ideal. From her father, she learned about books, ideas, and liberality. More importantly, she watched her father struggle with responsibilities of the family and his work. Stetson struggled in a similar way with the powerful forces of the ideal woman and her equally strong desire to work. The conflict not only produced debilitating
periods of hysteria, but eventually doomed her marriage to Charles Walter Stetson.

Much of Stetson's early training in public address came from example and practical experience as well. She attended lectures, listened to sermons, read literature aloud, performed pantomime, and attended the theatre. She augmented such activities with a personal commitment to improve her speech, resolving to speak responsibly and truthfully. Experience and desire were certainly solid foundations on which to build a public speaking career. However, it was not until she began formally to address audiences that she developed any consistency in speech preparation, composition, and delivery.

In the early days of her lecture career, Stetson established a regular routine of speech preparation. She had the capacity to set down on paper lengthy speech manuscripts in one or two sittings. She usually began writing a manuscript for a sermon, lecture, or club talk two or three days prior to the occasion. If time permitted or a willing listener was available, she would read the speech aloud for practice. Choosing to read her speeches was only natural in light of her background in interpretative reading. Her voice was well-modulated, her diction was precise, and her appearance was animated and energetic. Furthermore, she had a flair for the dramatic and that knack often made its appearance in her speeches. On one occasion, while giving a speech on the impact of fashion upon the body, she unveiled a picture of a horse wearing a tightly drawn corset around its mid-section.¹ The

¹ Unidentified newsclipping, AESL MS., fol. 266.
visual obviously dramatized her point concerning the ridiculous nature of feminine fashion.

Examination of her lecture manuscripts reveals other consistencies in her speechmaking. Regardless of the audience or occasion, Stetson liked to illustrate the process of social evolution by using examples or analogies that depicted the power of evolution. In her Sunday school sermon, she traced the evolution of man's belief in a god. At Hamilton Hall, she discussed the development of quadrapeds and binary creatures. Additionally, she used the natural phenomenon of lightning to exemplify the inevitability of social progress, pointing out that primitive man had stood in awe of lightning while modern man studied it and put it to use for the betterment of society.

Similarly, Stetson repeatedly formulated her conclusions concerning the status of women and their role in the advancement of society from laws and principles of nineteenth-century reform Darwinism. It was in her lectures and sermons of the early 1890's that she tested and refined her thoughts on evolution as they applied to women and society. Those ideas formed a core of premises from which she argued later in *Women and Economics*. Those premises included the law of action-reaction, the law of use and disuse, and the principle of function determines organ. From these she argued that women's economic dependence upon men, a condition reaching back to primitive times when the male hunted for a livelihood and the female was mother and domestic, was the inevitable consequence of centuries of social conditioning. Yet, always reflecting a sense of optimism, she held in her speeches
that the very process that had relegated women to the status of a
domestic servant held the key to women's equality. In commenting
upon Stetson's *Women and Economics*, Degler captures the essence of
this thought:

> Her whole argument, in fact, rested upon an evolutionary
scheme of things, in which women's new role was defended
as a natural outgrowth of social evolution, not simply
of natural rights in the eighteenth century sense of the
term.

Although the sermons and lectures examined in this study were
delivered under conditions that normally would entail an
informative speech, Stetson used the occasions to advance her
thoughts on society and especially women. She identified certain
problematical conditions existing in nineteenth-century
America—economic competition, selfishness, and the cult of true
womanhood—and offered solutions for them. Her speeches, then,
were calls to actions, exhortations for change. In an effort to
convince her audience of the reasonableness of her thoughts, she
worked into her lectures numerous logical proofs. They were
intended to display her expertise in social evolution; they were
an effort to establish herself as a rational, sensible, social
scientist. Thus, exhibited in her lectures was the desire to find
scientific answers for social problems. That desire eventually
appeared in her *Women and Economics*. Commenting upon the
treatise, Degler observes, "Convinced herself of the power of

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2 Quoted from Degler's "Introduction to the Torchbook
science, and especially Darwinism, she cast her study in pseudo-scientific terms."

In her logical proofs, Stetson used the doctrines of reform Darwinism as enthymemes. She was especially partial to the concepts of heredity and environment, the principle of action and reaction, and the modifying power of function upon the organs of living creatures. By their nature, these concepts lend themselves to causal lines of arguments. As seen in the previous chapters, Stetson frequently employed such topoi as cause to effect or consequences. In her Sunday school sermon, for example, she argued from consequences, stressing that the course of evolution could be affected by human action. Similarly, she maintained in "Our Social Duties" that the urgent push to better oneself economically, often at the expense of others, was the natural consequence of a society enamored with competition and wealth. Also, she argued in her lecture to the woman's club that women's restriction to mere sexual functions had a divisive impact upon society, separating human functions into either masculine or feminine categories. Finally, she reasoned causally in her message to the Nationalists of Los Angeles. She held that such conditions as dishonesty, selfishness, and corporate corruption were the enduring effects of a competitive society. In essence, she attempted to dissuade humanity from accepting the deterministic attitude of the survival of the fittest.

The analysis of her speeches also revealed consistency in her use of emotional appeals. Those appeals generally were intended to induce a level of energy that would move her predominantly female listeners to shed the image of ideal womanhood. Stetson believed that her listeners needed a strong stimulation to arouse them from acquiescence and to secure the internal commitment necessary to effect changes she proposed in domestic, maternal, and marital roles.

Stetson was particularly adept at evoking intense emotions by means of her lectures. She would arouse feelings of indignation by highlighting the corrupting influence of the plutocrat; she would stimulate the ire of women by stressing their unfair economic suppression; or she would awaken feelings of shame for allowing corruption and selfishness to infiltrate the character of humanity. Yet she usually tempered such harsh notions with optimistic expressions of the value of human existence. She would stress the inherent benevolence of man, temporarily suppressed by a competitive economic system, evoking feelings of self-assurance and self-worth. Similarly, she conveyed a sense of hope by speaking of a future where human cooperation and love reigned supreme. By eliciting such extreme emotions, Stetson was able to identify the enemies of social progress and generate a uniform resistance to their existence. At the same time, she identified the forces of justice with such emotions as love and benevolence, instilling a favorable disposition in her listeners toward carrying out the difficult task of social reform.
Stetson was predictable in her use of ethical appeals as well. To establish the probity of her character, she typically connected herself and her cause with the noble and virtuous. She connected Unitarianism, nationalism, womanhood, and art with the virtues of magnanimity, magnificence, liberality, courage, and justice. In contrast, she depicted the enemies of social progress as depraved, immoral creatures. She labelled capitalists, corporate magnates, social climbers, and pretentious art lovers as greedy, selfish, corrupt, artificial, and dishonest.

As for proving her sagacity, she was equally reliable in her techniques. She demonstrated a broad familiarity with important topics of the day, especially organic and social evolution, utopian socialism, and liberal Christian theology. From these she inferred reasonable conclusions concerning problematical conditions plaguing society and proposed equally reasonable plans for their resolution. She also showed a diversity in her intellectual and artistic background by drawing material from biology, Biblical history, oriental history, literature, and art. Additionally, she conveyed sensitivity and insight into the dynamics of human relationships by her thoughtful analysis of friendship, love, and marriage.

Stetson's efforts to establish good will with her audiences followed a typical pattern, too. In general, she tried to identify with her listeners' beliefs and values. In her two religious talks, for example, she displayed a sensitivity to the efforts of both conservative and liberal theologians to accommodate scientific theory with Christian doctrine. Accordingly, she inte-
grated into her philosophy of social order a faith in God, evolution, and humanity. When she addressed her Nationalist friends, she exalted their vision of an utopian society and highlighted their unified contempt for the plutocrat. She also identified with the desires of the largely female audiences who attended her women's club and domestic sociology lectures. Particularly, she acknowledged their shared desire to improve themselves as mothers and wives, and, most importantly, to secure equality in the affairs of society. Similarly, she identified with the beliefs and values of the Browning club, praising both the poet and the society named after him.

Criticism of Stetson's early speeches, however, has contributed more than just an identification of her rhetorical techniques and strategies; it also has provided further clarification of the nature and scope of her thoughts on social problems plaguing nineteenth-century America. From the outset of her public speaking career, Stetson distinguished herself from other liberal reformers of the period by approaching social improvement from a broad perspective. While her contemporaries devoted their skills and energies to specific reform programs or legislation, she directed her energies to the broad mission of improving the human race. Taking her message directly to the women and men of America, she spoke of a future where human benevolence, human dignity, and human cooperation were the dynamic elements of society. As seen in the previous chapters, Stetson was extremely opportunistic, making the most of every speaking engagement to profess her belief in the coming of a period of
human perfection. Indeed, she supported and worked for such movements as nationalism, populism, and feminism; however, she viewed these particular movements as individual components of a much broader humanistic philosophy. As she described her mission in life, "I am here to serve the world. As a perceiver and transmitter of truth and love--an interpreter and reconciler [sic]."^4

Although her social philosophy was broad in approach, Stetson nevertheless framed a plan of action that would set humanity on a course of progress and eventual perfection. In her early speeches, she challenged, prodded, urged women to take the initiative and to throw off the shackles of economic dependence and become contributing partners in the work of society. On the whole, humanity would prosper from the equal partnership of man and woman.

Certainly, Stetson's critique of society was bold, even radical. Especially audacious were her new thoughts concerning the traditional roles of woman. Cooperative housekeeping, cooperative child rearing, and her egalitarian approach to work and marriage sharply contrasted with dominant Victorian views. In essence, she conveyed the image of a bold, courageous advocate of reform who carried a difficult but vital message. She communicated a sincere desire to identify and rectify those conditions restricting the natural development of men and women. Her message was not that of a crank but of a woman sensitive to the human condition. Consequently, her audiences perceived her as a woman with a cause, a cause vital to their best interest and to the welfare of society.

^4 "Thoughts and Figgerings", 9 May 1900, AESL MS., fol. 16.
Stetson's bold critique of nineteenth-century womanhood also foreshadowed the feminist movement of the 1960's and 1970's. Her call for equal economic, career, and political opportunity for women echoed the sentiments of contemporary feminists who were instrumental in the formation of such organizations as the National Organization of Women, the Women's Equity League, and the Women's Political Caucus.

The lectures examined in this study were important to the life and career of Charlotte Stetson. Beginning in 1883 with her Sunday school talks and moving into the decade of the nineties with her club and class talks, she laid the foundation for what was later a noteworthy career as speaker and writer. In these lectures, she was able to verbalize an emerging social philosophy that integrated her thoughts on religious, social, and political issues. They enabled her to eke out a living, giving her a sense of accomplishment, self-worth, and renewed self-confidence. More importantly, they introduced her to others who had the same reform ideas. Clergy, writers, and social-political activists enveloped her in a network of movements that allowed Stetson to continue to refine her skills as a lecturer. On the whole, her early lectures were an apprenticeship that prepared her for a life of reform.

Taken separately, Stetson's early lectures were not significant in the sense of some dramatic rearrangement of the social, political, or economic structure of America. Yet taken together, they are significant in that they reveal the efforts of one woman who worked diligently to further the cause of human benevolence in American society. In the final analysis, her
lectures detail the genesis of a social reformer and feminist who tried to move society nearer perfection by preaching faith in brotherhood and cooperation.
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Unpublished Materials


Vita

Stephen Robert Guempel was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 6, 1950. After graduating from Lafayette High School (St. Louis) in 1968, he attended Southeast Missouri State University, receiving his Bachelor of Science Degree in May 1972. In 1975, he earned the Master of Arts Degree from Louisiana State University. Since then, he has taught for nine years at Louisiana State University at Eunice and has worked toward completion of the doctoral degree at Louisiana State University. He and his wife live in Eunice, Louisiana, where they are rearing their four children.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Stephen Robert Guempel

Major Field: Speech

Title of Dissertation: Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman, A Voice For Progress And Perfection: A Rhetorical Analysis Of Selected Addresses, 1883-1892

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]
[Signature]
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Date of Examination:

May 7, 1986