THE WORK OF WOMEN'S CLUBS.

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There is a world of mind and a world of matter. In the beginning it was the physical that predominated, and man—the man with the strongest brute force, was exalted as leader. As time passed mind found its place in the development of the world, but learning hid itself among the religious orders, and many rulers of great nations knew not even the letters that spelled their names.

Women's Place in Olden Times.
What was woman's place in this age of darkness and ignorance? She was the slave, the drudge or the plaything of man, supposed to be without soul or intellect. Even St. Paul, who had a keen insight into most things, failed to foresee the place she was to fill in the world. In his letter to the Church at Corinth he wrote: “The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; a man indeed is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man; neither was the man created for woman, but the woman for the man.” Putting forth boldly these and other assertions regarding woman’s position, a second thought caused him to add concerning this, “I have no commandment of the Lord but give my own judgment.”

Since time began there has been a gradual evolution in the development of woman, and consequently in her place in the conduct of affairs. There were learned women in England in Elizabeth's age, but learning was not popular. It is not half a century since Tennyson wrote:

“She knows but matters of the house
And he, he knows a thousand things.”

Jane Austin was no mean writer of fiction for her day, yet she was considered a “blue stocking,” and her writings did not add to her popularity. She gave expression to her discontent and contempt of the age in which she lived, when she wrote: “A woman if she have the misfortune to know anything should conceal it as well as she can.”

Women's Sphere To-day.
In the last century there were many brilliant women, sparkling in conversation, wielding an influence in politics, but in the nineteenth century they are
found filling a new place, and because they were ready for it they have quietly, without ostentation, taken their exalted position shoulder to shoulder with man. They aim no higher, and are sharing his burdens while enjoying with him the wholesome pleasure of life. Now that they have come into their own no one rejoices more than their co-worker; he gives them the lighter end of the burden and shields them even more tenderly than of old, while through their eyes he sees the world in another light and is finding new manhood and new happiness.

The intellectual awakening of women in our day can not be traced to any one set of influences; there have been many at work. The clubs, which are a part of the general evolution, have had much to do in showing to them the wealth of their own minds, in quickening their mental and spiritual life. Woman's sense of duty, which is strong and which when she disregards it causes her to suffer, gives her a feeling of responsibility towards the development, the mental improvement of self that finds its answer in club work. Through them she has stepped out into the freedom of the outer air and has found a kinship with the whole world.

I have said before and I hope I may be pardoned for repeating here that women have found time for self-culture, for clubs, through the changes in their relation to labor, caused by men taking to themselves much of the work that was formerly considered exclusively theirs. Many of the things which in the old time bound them down, which held head and hand in the thralldom of weary work, have, through the development of science, become unnecessary. There is a cry among men that women are crowding them out in their domain, becoming clerks, lawyers, doctors, brokers and even practical builders of houses. So they have, but it became necessary, for men have pushed into their sphere as weavers, bakers, milliners, dressmakers.

One of the multi-millionaires of New York, not long ago, had a chef to whom he paid a salary of $5,000 per annum—note that when a man is a cook he becomes a chef and draws a salary, not wages. This chef resigned his position because his employer—you would not say master—added salt to the soup which his dictum had passed upon as perfect. So men stepping into woman's place become autocratic and demand and receive higher pay for the same work, where woman takes the man's place conditions are reversed. In days gone by certain duties were performed at "early candle light," and who was it furnished the candles? From early dawn women slaved at this unsavory toil. The tallow was tried out and melted while the air was redolent. It was well that the houses stood apart, for it was always "Candle day" in some household; and where would have been the fragrance of the egglantine, the four o'clock and the pink, had our dear, dainty old grandmothers had only the smell of melted tallow in their nostrils from Sunday to Sunday? Man stepped in and took to himself the lighting of the world, and now "we press the button and he does the rest." He makes the butter and the cheese, he makes the shirts, he launders the linen and he makes the bread, the cake, the crackers. So we might go on through the whole category of baking, weaving, sewing, but it is unnecessary for my point.

A pretty clock once stood on the dressing table of a young girl, of which a friend said to her, "Excuse me, my dear, but your clock does not seem to keep correct time." "Oh, you are mistaken," replied the girl, "that clock is all right, the trouble is you don't un-
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derstand its peculiarities; when both its hands stand at twelve it strikes six and I know that it is half past four."

Longfellow said truly, 

"Things are not what they seem."

Intelligent Methods.

To some masculine minds women seem to be wasting time in attendance at clubs for which home duties are neglected, and they judge so because the housework is not done as their mothers did it. They forget that it is they, with their multiplied patents, their improved clothes wringers and dish washers, sewing machines and cooking utensils, in which a whole dinner may be cooked at once, who have made housekeeping light work, besides the greater part as done of old, to-day they do themselves. The art of spinning, weaving, salting down meats and stringing apples have become lost arts in the family economy by the march of progress. But the science of home making and home keeping has become a finer art. If the old ways are gone the new ways are better. Woman to-day is giving to the home a more intelligent service than ever before; she has studied sanitary laws, and the air is pure and the drinking water free from the contamination of outbuildings—that sure breeder of typhoid and diphtheria. She has studied psychology and knows that her child thinks before he speaks, that the development of the mind must be slow; and so because she knows her children grow normally into the similitude of the divine mind. She knows food values, and so the bodies of those of her household are properly nourished and the mechanism not stunted nor worn out on waste material.

Women have had time to learn these, and a thousand other things, because men have taken upon themselves so much that of old was their work they have been freed from the drudgery of half a century ago and have now time for culture, for entertainment, for clubs.

Women's Clubs.

Club life is uplifting. It takes us out of the rut of thought and action and gives us a broader outlook; a deeper insight. After the first pleasure of the study of art, literature, history, politics, philanthropy, it is discovered that the true secret of knowledge is not "to know, but to do."

Shakespeare says:—

"Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtue, they on thee.
Heaven doth with us as in with torches
Not light them for ourselves; for if our
virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not."

The Wisconsin State Federation of Women's Clubs is to-day composed of 115 clubs with an individual membership of over four thousand, and these four thousand women, while aiming towards intellectual development, towards culture, towards betterment of self, have gained the true wisdom of altruistic thought, and are reaching back to help others to come up higher, for Goethe gives assurance, "On every height there lies repose."

Some years ago in a fine public discourse I heard it said, that it were well if all could realize the power of individuals when combined in a mass. A torchlight procession is made up of many single men, each bringing his solitary lantern from his own home, but when they are massed together and their various lights, blue, red and green and white, may be seen playing and flashing in the far distance they present a sublime spectacle and seem a grand army marching on to victory. So club women bring together their diverse
many colored lights and let them shine before men, and they appear not simply as so many separated individuals, but as the Sacramental host, moving on as with flaming torches and streaming banner to the conquest of the world.

Clubs for the Farmer’s Wife and Daughters.

A half dozen or a dozen neighboring women in a farming community form a club,—they may call it a Kensington Club or they may call themselves The Daughters of Ceres. They meet once a week, and some one reads while the others sew and they have many delightful afternoons. At first only the pleasure of intercourse holds them together, then comes the desire for a more formal organization, more definite work. A president is elected and the meetings thereafter are conducted according to parliamentary usage. Where is the gain in this formality, you ask? It teaches how to properly conduct a meeting, how to put a motion, the rules of debate, above all how to be governed by a majority. It rubs off rough corners, and the characteristics of each become rounded, symmetrical, and women so trained may be thrown into any work with others without inharmony or friction. The club, from reading stories or books, excellent in itself, takes up a serious course of study, and then, or even at the first, adds its torch to the light of the federation and is helped as it is helpful.

Such a club can be sustained as well in the country as in the city, if distances are not too great, and it will be the more valuable to its members because of their separateness from the distractions of town. It would find help for its work in the federation. The Library Committee would furnish it outlines of study and traveling reference books. The Educational Com-
Children in many places properly encouraged have taken great pride in this work, also in reporting needed improvements to proper authorities which they, passing over the roads so many times weekly to and from school, discover before others, and promptly reporting save delay and added expense. The work is further promoted through the children by the “Do” and “Don’t” cards which are furnished free by the federation and now hang in every room of very many schools. They are printed on large squares of cardboard and read:

**DO**

Make your street and yard in front and rear clean and attractive.
Plant shrubs, vines and flower seeds.
Pick up loose paper.

**DON'T**

Throw upon sidewalks or into the street fruit skins or waste paper.
Spit on floor or sidewalks.
Throw stones at birds.
Injure trees or flowers planted in public places.
Mark walls or buildings.

On many of our Wisconsin farms there are attractive homes, some of which have been illustrated in previous bulletins, but frequently we find beauty and I might say health sacrificed to what is thought to be convenience, and the barn, the granary, in fact all the out-buildings, elbow the house in unwholesome proximity.

In an old churchyard in a Kentish village there was not long ago discovered the following epitaph:

“In the morning I went forth well, Brought home my death, took by a smell; Therefore in death always prepare, To meet our Lord and Saviour there.”

Thus it is to Heaven we ascribe the ills brought on by ourselves. The country is free from the menace of sewer gas and dirty alleys, but has it yet learned the distances foul disease-breeding germs will travel through the soil vitiating the well water.

**The Farm Home and Surroundings.**

Some homes on the farms of Wisconsin are as beautiful in the refinement of surroundings as any to be found in the cities. But there are others, more especially in the northern part of the state, far otherwise. In the cities it is the fashion to keep all the machinery of work out of sight. Kitchens are placed in the rear or on the tops of the houses to get rid of disagreeable sounds and odors, while on one of the beautiful avenues of Milwaukee, stables costing thousands of dollars are placed out of sight below a hill, at the back of the grounds, so as not to interfere with the view of the lake. Sometimes in the country, in the exaggerated idea of utility, all other is lost sight of, and outbuildings crowd close to the house, shutting off the view of distant hills or rippling streams, and are always a reminder of the drudgery of life, to say nothing of even more disagreeable things.

If the buildings are there the women of the household can do something to make them better by planting vines or quick growing box alder trees to shut off the unsightly things; if they are yet to be built they can use their influence to have them relegated to their proper place in the rear. Those buildings do not gain interest or beauty, either when covered with posters of a by-gone circus or advertisements of stove polish, plug tobacco or its antidote, where you are requested “not to spit your life away.”

In Wisconsin, as in most other parts of the country, we have been too busy clearing up lands and growing out of
the log cabin period to have had time to devote to the esthetics of life, to that which is the development of beauty, but now, in most parts of the state, we are free from the long grind, and woodpiles are relegated to the rear. Vines clamber over the porches, lawns are cut, trees are planted along the road sides, flowers are in front instead of vegetables, and the homes become an expression of the culture of their inhabitants, and preach a sermon to the passer-by.

"Go make thy garden as fair as thou cans't,
Thou workest never alone,
Perchance he whose plat is next to thine
Will see it and mend his own."

The line of demarkation between city and country, like the Mason and Dixon line, is fast disappearing, even in imagination, and women's clubs have had much to do with the advance. In some places instead of forming what has long been known as city federations, country federations or sectional federations are organized, and city and country clubs hold quarterly meetings together, and each are stimulated to new growth. To make acquaintance with the farmers' wives, to give them pleasure and help, women in many towns are opening rest rooms for country women, where they and their children may spend the time while waiting for husbands detained by business, and club women meet them there on an equal footing, and mutual good is gained. The world of thought grows broader as progress is made, and a woman is no longer judged by the abundance of that which she has. To the woman of the country, as to the woman of the town, is now opened a field of new opportunity, and each is only judged by the heart, the intellect, the spirit, which she makes manifest.

Committees Appointed.

Supt. McKerrow named the following gentlemen as a Committee on Resolutions: C. P. Goodrich, Ft. Atkinson; H. C. Taylor, Orfordville; L. E. Scott, Neenah.

The following Ladies' committee was appointed to pass upon certain exhibits: Mrs. A. A. Arnold, Galesville; Mrs. A. C. Neville, Green Bay; Mrs. H. A. Briggs, Elkhorn.

The Institute adjourned until 9:30 next day.