

TRIPLE PURPOSE OF ORGANISATION.

"There is one other point I wish very much to make. In what way is organisation going to relate you to the rest of the world? Organisation, to my mind, has always a triple purpose. First, it lifts the individual out of her isolation, whether that be an isolation of egotism, of conceit, or of ignorance, it lifts the individual out of it and brings her into relation with her peers. I think there can be no nobler word applied to any person in the world than 'peer.' The House of Peers! What does peer mean? The House of Peers is a place where every man is obliged to recognise every other man as his equal, and therefore to give to him the courtesy he would demand for himself. Every organisation lifts its members into a House of Peers, lifts them to an equality with those doing the same work and serving the same purpose. Now, the first step to lift a nurse into the peerage of her profession is to measure one's self candidly. In isolation you never know what your real qualities are. The man who could lift only a few pounds weight, if never tested by the strength of any other man, might imagine himself a Samson. Any one of us in isolation may get wrong and exaggerated notions of what we are, and what we know. Just as soon as you are lifted into this peerage of your own rank, then you have achieved not only this first object of bringing yourself out of isolation, but have also found yourself a member of a body that has new duties, no longer just the duties you had as an individual. Every organisation must consider not only what it owes to its members, but what it owes to that larger section of humanity which can never be its members. You have duties to other organised bodies. It is some twenty years since I have spoken to any organised body of women and left out this final point, the duty to other organised bodies. Think how much you owe, for example, to the women who belong to the generation preceding our own. There is only one way in the world of paying any debt to our ancestors, and that is by paying it to our contemporaries and our successors.

"There is a danger which besets class organisation. It not infrequently happens that when professional women have joined with their peers to form an organisation to care for that profession, or craft, or cult, they feel that they have achieved what they sought. However, they are now become as isolated as a profession as they were before as individuals. Now you are doing just as damaging a thing to society if you isolate yourself as an organisation as you are if you isolate yourself as an individual. It is not quite so narrow; the island you live in is

a little larger, but it is an island still. To go back to England, it ought to be a hitching post for every organisation of nurses that shall be established by any branch of the Anglo-Saxon race. Why? Because there the steps were taken, first, to nationalise what had been localised; second, to internationalise what had been nationalised.

"You are now a State society. The next step is to affiliate with the National Society of Nurses of the United States. There are no finer women to be found in any profession than Mrs. Robb, Miss Palmer, Miss Dock, and Miss Nutting, who have done so much to organise nurses in our country. In that organisation you will find yourselves already affiliated with the national associations of other countries in an international bond. Then you will have achieved, as far as it can be achieved on this plane of life, redemption from isolation. As you are increasing your sense of relationship your consciousness is expanding to meet its requirements, and you are dignifying yourselves and your own conception of life. When a woman has got to that point she does not need to worry at all about what degree of respect society is going to give her. Society pays us always the respect we earn. It may not pay it to-day—and I think it often does not—but are any of us living for to-day? Certainly a nurse is not. She is always living to remove to-day's condition. If there were not conditions to be removed she would not be living at all as a nurse. So she is always looking forward. That is a good attitude for all of us.

"Key your ideal to the right point. It is this multiplication and extension of relationships which will help you to key your ideal. No nurse could feel that she belonged to a common, vulgar trade, who had association with such colleagues as Miss Nutting, and Miss Isla Stewart, the head of St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

"I realise that this talk has been somewhat rambling, but I hope you will feel that there have been points in it; that you can keep these points in mind, and that none have pricked you. Finally, I know your final salary is to be paid over a counter where there can be no overcharges and no underpayments. It is to be paid over a counter where counterfeit coins never pass. You know you will get it in pure gold from the very same mine and the very same mint from which the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved, and you will get only just that amount of it that comes back to you as the reflex of your own expression while you are practising your profession on the earth."

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