

## The American Nursing World.

## A QUESTION ANSWERED.\*

A Reply to the Question often asked: "Of what Benefit will the Associated Alumnae be to Me?"

By Miss L. L. Dock.

I am a nurse—self supporting, self dependent and hard working. The profession of nursing which I have adopted is severely exacting, often closely confining and frequently carried on under the saddest and most distressing circumstances. If I concentrate my whole being on it and devote my entire self to it—to the exclusion of all else—I become a one-sided person, a creature with but one set of ideas. I lose all else of life and am almost a machine—a skilful one perhaps, a tender one perhaps—but is this the end for which I was created? May I not labour with love at the work which I chose among the sick and suffering, without having to give up all touch with the world of vitality, of energy, of growth, of struggle towards advancement. Must the whole world go on and I stand still? I can see around me my sisters, who—in churchly orders—in semi-military organization—have so renounced all else that they might devote themselves only to this one work. What does my reason teach me of the result of their lives and unselfish labours? Why, that in spite of all their heroic virtues of unselfish tenderness, courage, and faithfulness, they pass away leaving everything just the same as it was before. Their lives are spent in mitigating suffering—but the supply of suffering is not lessened by their self-sacrificing devotion. They raise no voice of protest against the many needless causes of human suffering. They do but obey. But obedience is not the highest attribute of the human being, neither is self-abnegation, nor self-effacement in ministering service.

I am a woman and standing singly and alone I am but a feeble human unit. My voice alone is not heard far. My efforts alone do not reach far, for I am not one of those great and gifted ones who rise once or twice in a century and whose lighted candle shines so that the whole world may see it and feel its rays. I am only one of the plain people of whom Lincoln said, "God must love them because he made so many." I tread daily a little, restricted circle. I long for a wider and fuller life. I see around me other people moving in larger paths, radiating influence, exerting unimagined strength, and full of enthusiastic purposes. I watch them and see that it is because they are moving in harmony and supplementing one another's efforts that they

\* Read at the Third Annual Meeting of the National Associated Alumnae of the United States, 1900.

have more freedom, more power and more meaning than I. Cannot I do the same?

You are here to-day because you have felt this urging to a fuller life, and because you feel the attraction of this power of union. Yet there are those who, still walled in by the narrow life, ask you, "What good will association be to me? What will this association do for me?" What may it *not* do for me? Let us rather ask, "What good is there that I may *not* attain through the combined strength and courage of all my fellows?" The little morsel of protoplasm upon the shore might ask, "What good will association do for me?" The brain cell or cardiac fibre in the pause of the thrilling, intense and necessary share of a rich and complicated life knows what association can do.

I cannot tell all that this association can do for me in the future, when I have attained to capacities which I do not now possess, but it will do much for me at present.

1st. It will give me self-confidence; help me in adjusting and expressing my ideas; make me a better balanced and more steadily poised woman than I now am.

2nd. It will lessen my egotism, the result of a narrow and self-centred life, and diminish that provincial spirit which makes me see myself in the centre of the universe out of all proportion to everything about me.

Do these two statements seem contradictory? They are not so. Self-confidence comes as self-conceit goes. Balance and solidity are only reached when a true sense of proportion is gained. When I go about the world with a chip on my shoulder it is because I have not yet outgrown the mental habits of primitive man.

3rd. It will enlarge my horizon to meet with my fellows. They will stimulate me with their different ideas and ways, and I may in turn help them in the same way.

4th. I shall gain from my association new powers for achievement and new prestige with the public. Such things as I might not be able to do alone I can do as one of a body, animated by the common motive of all its members, and other persons and other organized bodies who would not look at me a second time if I went before them as an individual, will offer me consideration and regard me with interest as one of a united force of wills and purposes. So strengthened I can hope to exert an influence such as would be undreamed of by me in my single and unassociated capacity. I may hope through my association to have a place in the affairs of the world; to be welcomed in the councils of other women and men too; to be considered as a factor in the works of reform, of education and of progress.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)