

The Career and the Woman



POSSIBLY the chief reason why more women do not have "careers" is their inability to think on long lines. Grant a woman the freedom that would make individual expression possible, and commonly she will be afraid to make use of the privilege. She is so reluctant to leave off accustomed activities to take up new ones! In this connection a woman I know is fairly typical of the sex. She formerly made her own gowns and constructed her own hats. If, by indefatigable shopping and running to bargain sales she could secure material cheaply and then successfully copy an expensive model, she felt that she had scored a triumph. Her time and strength she counted as nothing. In one instance she saved fifteen dollars by making a frock upon which she devotedly put miles of stitching, and afterward she had to go to the doctor. His bill was thirty dollars.

The footing up of that account, I think, did more to cure her than medical treatment. Since then she does not consider it necessary to do all her buying at bargain sales in order to save money, and a further deliverance is that she now has time to read something besides department store advertisements.

It must be admitted that in these days she is not quite so well dressed as she used to be, and doubtless the house is not so uniformly immaculate since she has left most of its care to the woman who comes in to clean at regular intervals, but of this there can be no doubt; her accounts show that by doing literary work—which she loves to do—she has earned more than enough to pay for all the sewing, millinery, house cleaning and laundry which she has hired done.

Of course all women do not want to write, but I believe that more frequently than they realize they could make the earnings of some chosen work pay for the doing of other work, and when such a result can be shown, it is improbable that any business-like husband will object to such methods of household economy.

Hiring work done.

MOREOVER, there is no reason why the work one hires done should not be satisfactorily done. By putting the people who do these tasks on a professional basis, by giving them the responsibility and requiring good results; more than all, by letting them feel that one considers what they do as skilled labor and by paying for it as such, it may all be counted upon to adjust itself very happily.

Women are told that if they fill their "heaven-appointed sphere" they will have no time for careers, but as a matter of fact it is not so much time that they need as to learn the proper use of time. No woman will be likely to enjoy a career until she has learned the difference between helpful, vital, upbuilding work and the sort of effort which must be considered merely petty pottering and fussiness.

That women should spend so much time in the doing of inconsequential things is not to be wondered at, for the woman trained in no especial pursuit is likely to be thoughtless and irresponsible the first third of her life, extremely bored and unprofitable for the last third, and in many cases lamentably small-minded and inefficient during the twenty-five years between—in that period when the most of her energy is supposed to be consumed with the bearing and rearing of her children.

Of course, every right-minded woman believes that her most beautiful work is the bearing and

rearing of a reasonable number of sons and daughters, but is it necessary that she should give her entire time to it? Does she give her entire time to it? In the past, when she was supposed to do nothing else, has she been giving any great proportion of her time to the vital needs of her family? She is to be their nurse. How much has she commonly been taught about nursing? She is to provide the food to nourish their bodies. How much accurate knowledge has the average woman of bodily requirements or of food properties? We are waking up to this lack, but as yet very slowly.

Women and children.

MORE important than these other considerations, a woman is supposed to furnish her children their ideals, and what are her own? All unconsciously, but in all truth, the greater number of women are worshipping the god of world gear. Like ants they scurry about in a ceaseless effort to accumulate things. Their greatest apparent pleasure is in the possession of things; their greatest desire, the money that will buy more things; their heaviest and most unceasing labor, the using and caring for these things.

It is therefore to be seen that if women are to have careers it first becomes necessary for them to get the useless obstacles out of the way, and indeed, it is for want of a worthier outlet that women have wrecked their energies upon millinery and lavished their very souls upon salads.

But the crux of the whole matter lies here; women will never find satisfaction in the commercial career. To their everlasting credit be it said, mere money-making, no matter how successfully they carry it through, will ever leave them at the end with nothing but dry husks and disillusionment.

Of what material, then, shall a woman fashion her career? What shall she do?

Well, first let her find out what she loves to do; then let her do the thing for the love of doing it. Fortunate she will be and sensible if she develops a taste or aspiration which shall be aided by her opportunities. There are not many people in the world who could have done only one thing well, and indeed, nearly all work is beautiful if it be beautifully done. And if you rightly consider it, why is it not quite as honorable to be a fine laundress as it is to be a fine musician?

What some women do.

HERE is a case in point: At Pocanoc I have a friend, a Mrs. Maxon, who always does laundry work for a limited number of patrons in the summer. It is something of a distinction to have her do one's work. Such marvels of smooth, white perfection! It is the fine art of laundering, and every acquaintance of Mrs. Maxon fully realizes that she has intelligence and poise as the loving worker always has.

Two or three similar instances I recall. Up in the Maine woods, for example, there is a woman who delights in making jams and jellies of wild fruits. She knows how to catch their delicate aroma and prison it in glass jars. Naturally she is proud of her skill, and that she should never have enough of her wares to meet the demand be-

speaks much for the commercial phase of her project. Both enjoyment and money are the reward of her efforts.

A similar thing is to be said of a dressmaker who lived, until recently, in a prosaic little town of Iowa. This time it was a girl who had a mother to support. Certainly that young woman merited the reputation that came to her for artistry of design and skillful craftsmanship in the making of frocks. Of course her work was a pleasure to her, and for some time she went on expending good taste and richness of fancy in sewing for the women of the village. When that did not satisfy her ambition she fashioned exquisite gowns for her own wearing, and such was her success that recently she received a call from a big establishment in Chicago, where, with ample materials to work with and a corps of assistants, she does nothing but design artistic frocks at a salary proportionate to her ability.

Another woman I happen to know who is no less fortunate in getting pleasure as well as adequate compensation out of her employment. In school she was about the last girl whom one would expect to find connected later in life with anything that might be called practical. After her marriage she taught music until the strain of that vocation broke her down nervously. Being a woman who demands some individual activity, she is now making exquisite confectionery. So perfect is her product that she is independent as to custom. She has more orders than she cares to fill.

Quite a different type of woman is Mrs. Morton, but she likewise is eminently successful. She can not cook, she can teach music, and with her music she earns money to pay a maid, as well as to employ an admirable nurse, who cares for her little son during the hours that she is occupied. In addition to being a good mother she has kept herself a spirited and sympathetic companion for her musical husband.

Woman's happiest career.

THESE examples of successful women, not to mention scores of others which might be quoted with equal significance, must clearly indicate that the work a woman can do in a home or in connection with a home is the work in which she will be happiest. And this is by no means a sentimental, but purely a physiological consideration.

Domestic life need not keep a woman from the self-expression, which is the truest meaning of a career. She may not produce as great a volume of work as though she were to cut loose from all ties, but who can deny that what she does produce, be it book or frock, a picture or a roll of butter, will be superior in quality because she has had the practical training and the deepening experience which she can best get as an intelligent, loving, home-making daughter, wife and mother?

Harriet Beecher Stowe baked the bread and rocked the cradle while she wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Jane Austin penned classics in the family sitting room. There is a woman today who is making rag rugs which have won for themselves a recognized place among genuinely artistic house furnishings. It was a woman who started, in a small way, one of our well known manufactories of art pottery.

As taste develops, people will demand lace and embroidery that are beautifully done, in place of the 'fancy work' horrors which nearly all women are turning out now to the distress of the discriminating. Certainly a day will come when dining rooms will not be crowded with the atrocities