

# CLUBS.

## THE PILGRIM LEGACY.

Annual Address to Members of the Nebraska State Federation of Women's Clubs, Oct. 21, 1898, by the Retiring President, Mrs. Belle M. Stoutenborough.

Members and guests of the Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs:—At the fourth annual meeting, held in Beatrice October, 1897, you listened attentively to the fundamental rules of arithmetic, explaining addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, as applied to the club and federation affairs, in which I submitted to you the equation—Enthusiasm plus information, minus selfishness, multiplied by activity, divided by 70, equals our state organization. Your close attention at the time together with the spirit manifested during the past year to solve other problems, encouraged me to outline a map re-adjusting the boundaries of our club domains in Nebraska—but the Denver meeting which was perhaps the greatest convention of women ever held in our land since it represented all the diverse phases of true Americanism shadowing forth the index of the coming hour, the universal sisterhood, which is no small element in modern progress—convinced me that the time was not yet ripe for geographical changes. Possibly there came to some of us a clearer vision in the high altitude of our neighboring state, "whose statutes (as Gov. Adams says) recognize that the Creator made no mistake when He placed man and woman side by side in the Garden of Eden."

Then, too, I fully agreed with the editor of one of our daily papers who wrote last July, "This is no time for changing geography text books. Wait until Dewey, Sampson, Schley, Shafter, Miles, Brooks and Copping are through with re-adjusting Uncle Sam's domains." Is it not true that we as Americans have feared to change the old map even when we might have taken peaceable possession of islands coveted by other nations. If I am not mistaken the incoming century will extend new lines in the foreign policy of our country, for the purposes of war have widened beyond our desires and our dreams. During the recent conflict while we who were so far from the noise and din of war, waited anxiously for news, it may be of one dear lad whose welfare overshadowed the liberty of a hundred unknown Cubans—the clock of time was striking the hour which tells of human progress. It has been truly said that "America has been dictating to the Angel of History so rapidly of late that she is taxed to the utmost to make the records," and conditions have changed so rapidly that the one who would today make the address prepared for yesterday might be obliged to make many changes.

Before taking a fresh look forward, rather in order that we may look ahead discerningly and wisely, almost everyone is moved just now to pause, and turn, for an earnest, a searching look backward.

Let us in imagination visit a winter scene, which has much to do both with what we are and what we are doing at the present time. The spot is a dreary northern coast. The time is chill December. The background is a drear, dense, leafless forest. The foreground is a pitiless ocean with ice margins along its sands. A little ship, of which every-

one is weary, lies in the offing—the Mayflower they call it. This ship has come upon this coast amid December frosts and snows but warm-hearted, refined and cultured men and women and little children are in those household groups. Back to that little strip of shore our thoughts may well run. We are a vast, rich, prosperous country, extending from ocean to ocean, from the great lakes to the gulf, and today under God we owe the quality of our heritage to these men and women. Strange do you say that the vastness of three thousand miles of wilderness and prairie should have become vocal with human voices in so short a time? Yet more strange the quality. In the very heart and center of this great country Nebraska sits a queen. Notwithstanding the fact that at different times she has been clothed with sackcloth; born, too, in the very heart and centre of this great century in 1867, her geography foreordained her to pre-eminence in the history of our nation. Nowhere, I believe, is there so much of general thrift, intelligence, comfort, opportunity for advancement, liberty of intellect, of conscience, expression and action. Nowhere schools more thronged, churches more amply sustained, legislation more equitable, a press more independent, enlightened and outspoken, household life more wholesome, sweet and sacred. Nowhere such a fair white city whose influence from an educational standpoint will be felt for a generation to come and whose gates swing wide open today to admit the president of these United States—never so united as today under his administration—than in our own fair state.

In this reference, or if you please, this inventory of the totality of our possessions, it is not my purpose to foster pride but rather, in view of all of this, what sort of woman ought we to be.

To be a Pilgrim woman today it is not necessary that one should come over in the Mayflower, but I believe you will agree with the statement that looking at the modern Pilgrim woman her new surroundings, new duties, the new influences at work upon her, that she is a direct evolution of her Pilgrim mother—just what, given the conditions, a prophetic eye might have foreseen she would be! that she has entered in and possessed the Promised Land which her mother only saw in vision from far off Pisgah's heights.

The changes that have taken place in woman's world within the last fifty years have amounted to one of the greatest and most consequential of all revolutions. We say that Mary Lyons' place in history is secure not alone for her extraordinary genius but from the fact of having her life identified with the beginnings of a great movement of woman's right to be educated. Geo. Wm. Curtis some years ago wrote: "It is settled that Juliet may study but may she study with Romeo." Today that question is settled by almost all the newer colleges—east, west, north and south until only here and there does some "belated owl lift up his avrio-comic hoot against it."

The Woman's club movement that has gained such headway in recent years is by no means confined to America. In England, Germany, France, and other European countries it stands for the new ideas and the new moral forces that are gathering themselves into closer coordination and so into greater power.

Rightly directed the combined influ-

ence of so many women will tell on the centers of social and political power. And who can have better reasons for being interested in bettering the conditions of life in the cities and in the country towns than those who would protect and make sacred the homes of the people. At any rate the time has past when intelligent and really high minded women can afford to shirk personal responsibility of this kind.

Columbus discovered a new world and we think we can not celebrate the event too much. The newly found realm was interesting because of the new resources, the new opportunities, the new possibilities, which it represented. The Congress of representative women held in Chicago during the world's fair marks the time of woman's self discovery. Gradually the more enlightened women of the world are discovering new continents of resources, of opportunity, of duty and hope. The enthusiasm shown in that great meeting extended into every state in our land and the following autumn our state chairman of correspondence issued a call through Miss Fairbrother's paper, the Woman's Weekly, for a meeting to form a state organization. Delegates from nearly all of the clubs of the state met in Omaha Dec. 10 of that year and perfected an organization, electing Mrs. Canfield, wife of the chancellor of our state university, as president. Perhaps no other woman west of the Missouri river has answered so many letters containing the one question, "How shall we start a club?" as Mrs. Lindsey, to whom we owe so much for the extension of the club idea into the interior of our state. The women who were so fortunate as to attend that first meeting went home with new ideas and new purposes for ideas, and moral impulses are more contagious than any disease and can no longer be shut up in any kind of quarantine. All honor to the women who were the first to feel the importance of developing an alliance for the purpose of uniting more closely the club women of our state.

As I recall that first meeting something of the old Pilgrim spirit stirs with in me. Did not we blaze the trees as we passed, as we formulated plans for future guidance? Although we were not in the forlorn conditions of the pioneer woman whose sole cooking utensil was a bake kettle. In which the lady of the house on one occasion preparing a meal for company, tried out lard, fried cakes, baked bread, stewed venison, brought water from the spring, made tea, and served it gracefully too—laughing the while as she recounted her many luxuries. But you will bear me witness that in the beginning of this organization there were no chafing dishes or Trans-Mississippi home-makers on the sideboard of our experience. Mine the proud distinction in that meeting to second a motion—a privilege which I shall ever appreciate.

Tonight we turn the searchlight upon the work accomplished by this organization during the years which have intervened since we enjoyed your hospitality—the number counted upon the fingers of one hand, the number representing the age of the N. F. W. C. The women who with some hesitancy called the meeting for organization never dreamed of such success. To be sure success does not lie in a mere aggregation of numbers but the most casual observer cannot fail to see that the united influence of the representative women of our state has become a real power for good. It is a comradeship more and more distinctly conscious and increasingly influential which the members of this federation now constitute, and I repeat that this great co-operative movement among our women is not without its significance. I might tell you that in the beginning of this movement we had twelve, perhaps fifteen clubs. Today we have eighty,

representing some four thousand women. At the biennial in 1898 Nebraska was represented by two federated organizations; at the Denver meeting last June there were nine additional clubs belonging to the General Federation, making eleven in all.

Forty of our clubs study literature; thirty-two, history; twenty-seven, current topics; twelve, art; eleven, child study; thirteen, parliamentary law; eleven, household economics; while the Lotus club of Lincoln has for one of its study topics arboriculture, and many of our younger club women are studying music. I might tell you of our circulating library which no longer skulks about bare-footed. No longer an experiment, but an important outcome of our state organization—of the art portfolios, numbering three hundred photographs of the old masters, at the service of the library patrons. I might tell you of the work of our educational committee, of the work accomplished by the members of our larger clubs, wielding the broom in city sanitation, hanging pictures in school rooms to encourage or promote the study of art and art history. The work of the women also in the smaller towns, beautifying their little public parks or the square on which stands the court house, opening rest rooms in the market towns, and reaching out the helping hand to the farmer's wife in the country, interest shown in organizing classes for young people and opening reading rooms where only good reading may be found—and I might go on enumerating the benefits which have come to us through this organization. All of which goes to prove that the women of Nebraska do not sit complacently under their vines and dream that this state meant nothing in God's plan except to



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