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THE PEN AND BRUSH

AN ADVENTURE IN PROFESSIONAL COMRADESHIP

That great group of women popularly known today as Career Women first began to show their heads to the public in the last two decades of the 19th Century. They were born of a movement which the conservative public thought more or less shocking, the movement for woman's economic independence. The established order of things knew that there had never been a time since the beginning of the human race when the woman had not, so to speak, paid her way. Certainly when the 19th Century opened she was an important factor in the economic set-up. But that set-up was soon thereafter dislocated by the coming of the machine. All sorts of things were transformed in the woman's life. Seeing herself put out of place she began to look about for something to replace what had been taken from her. And so slowly there came up a class which we call today Career Women.

With their arrival came serious problems of readjustment. How were they to carry on these independent careers they were seeking, careers as writers, artists, crafts-women in homes which were more or less contemptuous of their

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efforts? Wherever the movement made itself felt women were forced to fight for a spot in which to work quietly, a place in which to write, to paint, to study. Family and friends seemed to conspire to frustrate their ambitions. To be sure there were women who in spite of the handicap did great things. Mrs. Oliphant in England wrote on the corner of a table in the hubbub of a family. Harriet Beecher Stowe produced "Uncle Tom's Cabin" with one eye on the kitchen stove. But the great majority wanted a room alone and they couldn't get it in the household, fight as they would.

I remember how that distinguished writer, long a member of the Pen & Brush - Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer - used to tell of her early experiences in getting out articles for the Century Magazine. There was a time limit to be observed, but the household had no respect for that time limit. She managed finally to secure the use of the library at certain hours. Having accomplished that much she sought to train her family to let her alone in those periods. She used to tell how one morning when she had only a half day in which to get in her copy she had tried to impress her Mother of the absolute necessity of not disturbing her under any circumstances. She thought she was protected when suddenly her Mother burst into the room, "Marianne, Marianne, you must come, the cat has had kittens in the kitchen and you must attend to her."

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Well, that is the way the family treated you. You must run down town for a spool of thread; you must come in and visit with a garrulous friend who had no business of her own, and you must look after the cat when she had kittens.

It was not to be endured. And exodus from the home began. Unattached women began to multiply in cities, particularly. But these women soon discovered that while this might solve for themselves one problem, that of free opportunity to work out what they had in mind, they had run up against unforeseen problems. They found themselves dislocated. All their lives they had had the close affection if sometimes irritating association of the families to which they belonged. They had enjoyed all sorts of everyday interests. Never until they were cut off did they realize what they meant, how important they were in an individual life.

They had belonged to a town which provided certain opportunities and protection, the importance of which they had not realized. They had had their "set", a friendly group whose language they understood, girls and boys with whom they had played and quarraled and danced from childhood on. Suddenly all these things were cut off. They were in a strange city. Where was that neighborliness - the very air of the town? Where was that sense of belonging? Here in ~~the strange mobs~~ people asked for your credentials, demanded ~~your~~ proof of your right to space and opportunity among them.

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You had to prove yourself at every step, the things which you had taken for granted all your life, the right to ask and to receive protection, the right to friendly sympathy and health in time of trouble. You had gained the right to work for economic independence, but doing so you had to pull out the supports on which your life so far had been based.

True, the experience varied with different women, but for a great number of them they found it was a hard road to hoe. Gradually there came to be a realization among these dislocated women that there was something more to be desired for a successful prosecution of a profession than a quiet room in which to work. They must restore that friendly backing which they had lost, build up relationships among women whose ambitions were like their own, whose problems and troubles were similar.

It was some such driving force as that which in 1893 brought together in New York City a group of a dozen or so women who had already successfully established themselves in their different arts or crafts. The group included writers, journalists, painters, interior decorators, actresses. Each of them had succeeded in getting what she sought - an opportunity for economic independence, a recognized place in her particular craft. But these women had come to feel, if not express, a need for something closer and warmer than work alone. They wanted sympathy, informal associations with

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those of their own kind, those who spoke their language, understood the principles by which they carried on their activities, had felt and yielded to the same driving force.

They began to meet occasionally in the studio of one of them, and finally decided they had found something which was worth developing, which might gradually be of use to others of their kind. So they decided to put themselves on a more formal basis, regularize their association. And to do this they formed a simple little club. It was very different from the ponderous, formal organizations which were spreading so rapidly over the country. It was not interested in doing something all the time. They planned few formal exercises. They came together more or less regularly, sometimes invited a guest, but principally they enjoyed one another, enjoyed shop talk, enjoyed sitting in a corner reading a book if they didn't feel like talking. Nobody was under compulsion to perform. What they had really struck, though I do not know that they expressed it in that way, was an adventure in professional comradeship, though so far as I know that is the last thing which they said to each other. They had found something they liked and that was enough for them apparently.

As the group was mainly composed of writers and artists they called themselves the Pen and Brush. Such was

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the simple, spontaneous origin of an adventure in professional companionship which has been going on now for forty seven years, and which although it has stretched its membership until it now numbers regularly something like two hundred and fifty it has not changed in essence, the original reason for coming into being. It is still a club of women who have carried their art or craft to a professional point, by which they mean that they have been able to stand the economic test, produce things that other people were willing to buy. To be sure there is something more required than this economic test. They also have to meet a certain, not too severe, standard of achievement and there is an emphasis on companionability. ~~To be sure~~ In these forty seven years there has been, because of the increased numbers largely, a necessity for a certain measure of ~~several~~ organizations. The Pen and Brush is an incorporated body. It has its Constitution, but it has never allowed its Constitution to injure its soul. The spirit of the Club is still much more important to its members as a whole than the letter of its law. The letter is obeyed for the sake of order but There is a general recognition that there is a higher law. However, the law is generally obeyed, must be because not only is the Club an incorporated body, it has become a property owner, and that entails obedience to the law.

This property owning came about as gradually and naturally as everything else has come about in the Pen and Brush. Forty or so years ago when the original group began to enlarge it had to find quarters to accommodate their

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growing membership. From a studio it went to an apartment, from an apartment to a house and finally the difficulties of renting became so great that twelve years ago the Pen and Brush decided to buy a house and pay for it themselves - no call on the public. It looked to the cautious in the group like a risky undertaking for a group of two hundred and fifty self-supporting women, none of them making much more per year than she needed to live on and discharge her obligations. But they did it by themselves, bought a fine New York house of a hundred or more years old - 16 East 10th Street.

And having got this much solid under their feet they set themselves to think of paying for what they had, and they are doing it. It is a matter of pride in the Pen and Brush that they looked the depression in the eye and did not whine. The Club has yet to see a year in which it has come out in the red, though that is not telling what agony of spirit it cost the treasurer who has handled the finances or what weariness of bones it cost the members who turned to raise money by bazaars, etc. The point is that this group of artists have up to date succeeded in handling alone what was for them a very difficult financial problem. And the outlook is not dark.

As the years have gone on each problem solved has led them as progress always does to new problems. Their professional interests have brought them together. They have

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never allowed difficulties to weaken those interests; never allowed them to be invaded. Difficult economic problems tempted prompted them many times to enlarge their membership, make themselves a general club. They had prosperous friends and if they opened their doors to them the economic problem would be easier, but as they saw it and pluckily contended, this would dilute their spirit, crack the sense of oneness that has been the real bond in the Club. No, they have clung, hard as it was and much agony of spirit as it has thrown on the management, to the feeling that they have something there they and other women need, and that they can only save their souls as a Club by clinging to that something.

One of the finest fruits of the Pen and Brush association has been the steady growth of interest in each other's work. For my part I have never seen anything like the lack of professional jealousy. Exel This season there are monthly exhibitions of member's work. You may have a picture on the wall in which you put all of yourself, but somebody gets the first prize and you and everybody rejoice over the first prize. You may not agree but you are never mean about it. You may be frank but you are not nasty. Every year the writers who have had books published in the preceeding twelve months come together and each spends five or ten minutes, largely in spoofing her own book. They hang over

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each other's books and try to get at the secret of them, undertaking - why - how. They rejoice in each other's accomplishments and the important thing they learn from them.

A long with this generous spirit has gone an interest in each other's personal problems and a sense of responsibility to do what you can to help solve them, and it has become one of the most precious developments of the Club. Years of companionship such as the members of the Pen and Brush have, ~~in spite of the fact that their profession is their basic interest,~~ open up the individual problems. For a group of self-supporting women these problems are very much alike. Books fail, pictures are not sold, positions held are lost, unexpected obligations stick up their heads, not to be denied. There is sickness and there is death. Again and again there comes a point where even so small a sum as $50.00 may stand between you and despair. The majority of the group knew this. It had happened or might happen to them. Some years ago there grew up in the group a feeling that in the interest of its solidarity, if for no other reason, the Club should prepare to meet this situation. What could they do?

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The answer came out of the blue. A member who had taken $150.00 in bonds when the financing of the Club House was under way left town. "I can't for health reasons use the Club," she wrote. "I would like to leave something with it. Could you use these bonds?"

Could we? Why not use that money to start a Benefit and Loan Fund where we could help a member in an emergency. No interest, no questions asked, only the understanding that when you are able you will of course return the money because of possible needs of other

From that small beginning some eight years ago this Benefit and Loan Fund has steadily grown. It is made up of two parts - a Capital Fund where the interest is used - and a Revolving Fund out of which loans are made. Unconsciously this Benefit Fund has cemented the membership. It has been in a way like that which happens in a family when something goes wrong with one of them and everybody turns to and helps with what they have. They don't talk much about it, but you know on the dark day somebody does care.

As I see it the Pen and Brush is ~~really~~ in 2 have said an adventure in professional companionship. The women there are trying to realize something which consciously or not women have long resented and envied in the life of men, that is their comradeship. Rarely is there anything like it achieved by women, ~~where~~ The circumstances ~~out~~ of thier life, have prevented

they find ~~no~~ ~~things~~ their daily [illegible]

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it, as the circumstances of men have given them opportunity to develop this noble relationship. It is possible for women to develop among themselves centers of conradeship parallel with those men long ago developed. The Career Woman has no more important problem on hand. It is not to be answered merely by activities, however interesting and useful, not merely by building Club Houses, not merely by supporting causes. It goes deeper than that. It is an affair of the spirit. What it means the Pen and Brush has attempted to answer in its book of members where are recorded the names of all those that have been a part of its life through the last forty seven years.

"These are the names," the Club book sets down, "of those who first conceived and have since carried on the Pen and Brush.

"Their belief in the energizing and renewing conpanionship of those who love and follow the arts and crafts brought them together. It has kept them together through the years.

"Upon the continuing strength of this spirit with the communal and personal affections arising from it, the future of the Pen and Brush depends."

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P. & B. Patience as an element in success
to Emmeline Pankhurst

are saying here & there that it is perhaps P. & B.
esp. spirit in 4 months of existence -

I have an impression from the letter
that could & must be done, that we are
going to hear of Theodora & may easily ad-
minister this rebuke & then let you & me
see on the walls & in print the results
of our common work. And I hope the time
may be coming the P. & B. is going more fast &
appreciate the opportunity & develop
all its latent value & keeping their point in the ad-
you ahead of
vance. I took like a bad one the whole affair -
Still we must admit [illegible] -
[illegible] -
Mrs Snowden asked me if I remained till you left
& I said I made a [illegible] answer - not in
fact & [illegible] & am sure [illegible]
ready & what the papers say [illegible]
[illegible] & the people who
[illegible]
[illegible] -
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

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~~like [illegible] cannot know better than they yet~~
~~very often [illegible] find [illegible]~~
~~[illegible] the events of [illegible] [illegible] the policy of [illegible]~~
~~[illegible] impractical. Sympathy with the men~~
~~who find themselves leaders in [illegible]~~
~~[illegible] are [illegible] to [illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~
Calls for humility.—

(1) Realize that we cannot know much of what is going on the world even in our country & therefore behave unto ~~be~~ avoid dogmatic opinions about the way things are being conducted. Events are so & so — leaders are so & so — but tomorrow many events will have changed the entire situation & cy to remove a our leader we look on as immortal — so fine are to think the thing of today is permanent. leader of today is gone — Face of things changed. Avoid too stiff connections about things.

(2) Avoid anger-leads — If ever the world called for pity it is that of today — It sometimes has become convinced that we can achieve peace & happiness by certain mechanisms — & to get these laws & systems we must ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ & we see ~~[illegible]~~ the [illegible] in [illegible] of [illegible] where the spirit — [illegible] of

the or [illegible] & [illegible] to [illegible]

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to know as well as mean ~~[illegible]~~ what is happening but it is the part of wisdom to realize that - the most [illegible] we can make

I find to believe that A. M. S. Japan have double of their undertakings ~~[illegible]~~ Black eagle at night. Position of man who had a bear to the lake - could not let go 2 cries. Come & keep me hold this bear.

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3

Democracy today - trying to rule a Democratic country by paying lawn - over loaded with. Now but ourselves the spirit which realized would make ~~all~~ ~~p~~ laws practically negligible -

Palmire - In all this chaos we invite - we hurry - I am inclined to think that - leads - is the cause of more remarks of justice & stability than any other practice - Hurry leads us to outlook essential factors in our problem - to half-day things to creating that which will work

Often think of S. where I gave anyway & stress at this leads a that - this party or that ~~this~~ could at that. H.E. forever now certain of his ads - ~~things~~ I wanted punishment. Refusal - things I handle too big for malice. Each known a little - no one all - Palmire & co-operation may unit -

The world is not going to end with us - a going to be ~~[illegible]~~ more one we to see the millennium - The unit. is little each unit. made in a day -

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