

## IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD

March 8, 1935

Description: Eleanor Roosevelt talks about successful women she has known.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt

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Last week/ I spoke/ in a general way/ of the actual achievements/ of women in different fields of work/ throughout the country/ and as a logical follow-up on that/ I think/ I should tell you/ about certain specific women/ who are at present/ in responsible positions. I am not going to undertake to tell you/ who are the greatest women/ or the most outstanding successes/ in their particular fields,/ but I am going to talk with you/ about some of my friends/ and acquaintances/ who have been/ and are/ a constant inspiration/ and help to me.

First of all,/ two women who have done much in their own lives,/ but whose outstanding achievements to me/ lie/ in their leadership of other women./ These women have mobilized and organized women/ not only in their own country/ but frequently/ in other parts of the world./ They are Dr. Anna/ Howard/ Shaw/ who died in 1919,/ and yet whose life/ no woman can read/ without a thrill of pride/ and who will serve/ as an inspiration/ to many women/ as long as any of us/ remember/ that there once/ was a time/ when many professions/ were not open to women/ and when they could not vote./ ~~Dr. Shaw's early years/ were full of hardships/ but that seemed only/ to bring her greater power./ She was both a preacher/ and a doctor/ and combined the ability to feel deeply/ with the humorous sanity/ of a disciplined individual.~~

As a young woman/ I went to hear her speak one night/ and afterwards/ went up/ and shook her by the hand./ Today I often wonder/ why anyone puts so much store/ by a mere hand shake/ but that chance to hear/ and look at Dr. Shaw/ meant a great deal to me/ because/ back of what she said/ was a great personality./ A personality/ which convinced you/ that she was sincere,/ that she understood/ and admired/ and pitied/ humanity/ and would have the courage/ to stand by her beliefs/ in the face/ of bitter opposition./

The other woman/ who was her friend and companion/ is still alive/ and is still/ a leader today./ Mrs. Carrie/ Chapman/ Catt did much/ in our fight for suffrage/ and has continued/ to work throughout the world/ for the rights of women./ She is now leading our next crusade/ and is galvanizing into action/ the strength of women the world over/ to work for peace.

~~The suffrage had to be won first,/ so that women might grow to realize/ their full responsibility as citizens/ and come to know/ what were the things they wished to accomplish/ with this new power./ On many questions/ they will divide as men do./ On peace/ as an objective/ there is little division/ though the methods by which it may be obtained/ cause dissention.~~

~~In the old days/ the influence of women/ was exerted in two ways,/ they were either rulers by birth/ and therefore had traditional power which their lineage gave them,/ or ruled by their power of beauty or charm/ over men in high places. Jeanne d'Arc and one or two saints/ were rulers for a short period/ because / of the need for them/ at a particular time in history/ but they/ were rare exceptions/ to the general rule,/ the great majority of women/ exerted indirect influence/ through their men. More and more today, however,/ women who are following the leaders of women I have spoken about/ are acting directly/ and taking their own share of responsibility/ for the work of the world./~~

In the field of social service,/ Jane Addams in Chicago/ blazed the trail/ for a new type of service to her neighbors./ This was not only to be of help/ to the poor in the Chicago slums/ but was to educate/ many, many people/ who later/ went out into the world/ to spread her doctrine/ of what it really means/ to be a good neighbor/ and to live with the interests of those around you/ uppermost in your mind./

Lillian Wald/ in crowded New York City/ built on Henry Street/ the same type of settlement./ She put the emphasis/ on the public health nurse/ and many a mother/ has looked with gratitude on the Henry Street nurses/ as they are called,/ and many an Eastside boy and girl/ looks back after a successful career/ to the inspiration/ received from the Henry Street people/ who lived under Miss Wald's wise influence and direction./ There is many a man/ also in high place today/ who owes his understanding of human needs/ to the contacts/ and experiences/ made in this settlement./ Lillian Wald originated the idea/ of the Red Cross town and country nurse/ and like all good ideas/ it has grown apace./ Only the other day/ I learned that a nurse/ known as a "Delanonurse" / because she is supported by money left by Miss Delano,/ is stationed on the Islands/ off the coast of Maine./ This work is particularly arduous in winter/ when trips must be made/ in an open boat/ in all weathers,/ and if a patient is seriously ill/ and must be transported back to the main land for hospital care,/ the practical difficulties of transportation/ to and from the boat/ and moderate shelter during the passage,/ seem almost insurmountable./ ~~Here is no question of choosing your time,/ you go when called/ and I understand/ that four years of it/ have reduced one healthy girl/ to a near wreck/ and yet it is compensating work./~~ The people are grand people,/ and you see actual results./ Lillian Wald can well say/ as one old man I heard of said/ "If I had to give up my memories,/ I would not wish to be a boy again". What memories! The Red Cross nurses./ The Children's Bureau/ established in the Federal Department of Labor/ and the multitudinous influences of Henry Street./ One could not ask for more/ in the way of accomplishment./

Mrs. Simkhovitch/ with her settlement house on Barrow Street in New York City/ has the same rich background of achievements/ to look back upon.

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration/ has at least one state administrator/ who is a woman/ and who has accomplished a vast amount/ for the people in her care/ and handled millions of dollars/ on a salary/ of a few thousands a year./ These women have talked little/ but their activities/ speak for them.

In a field/ which is still largely in the hands of men/ we have one woman at the top/ and others close behind/ and a real stride has been made in having a woman,/ Phoebe Omlie,/ appointed in the Department of Commerce/ in the Bureau of Air Commerce./ Amelia Earhart,/ born in Kansas/ is now claimed by the whole United States./ She was a teacher/ and a social worker/ and after she flew the Atlantic,/ she thought that she could return to her work/ in the Settlement House, but found/ somewhat to her bewilderment/ that she was a celebrity/ and the face of the world was changed./ She has charm,/ good looks/ and the simplicity/ which only great people have./ She is young/ and with adventure behind her,/ there is still plenty ahead/ but it is the future of aviation/ which counts with her/ as it does with most pilots./ She has an added interest/ in giving women/ the chance for better training as pilots/ than they have today/ and these two objectives/ lie back of all the lectures/ and activities/ which she carries on/ between her major flights./ Every woman must have a deep and abiding admiration/ and I think affection/ for her.

In the field of business/ there are so many I could take/ but perhaps/ Miss Mary Dillon,/ President/ of the Brooklyn Borough Gas Company since 1925/ will serve/ as a good example./ She was educated at Erasmus High School/ and became general manager/ of the company/ in 1916. She married in 1923/ and though her progress upward in the company/ seems to have been steady,/ she found time to engage in various other activities./ She was vice-president/ of the Coney Island Center,/ vice-chairman of the Women's Exposition of Arts and Industries,/ trustee and director/ of Harbor Hospital,/ director/ of the Brooklyn Girl Scouts/ and vice president and director/ of both the Coney Island Chamber of Commerce/ and the Brooklyn/ Chamber of Commerce./ She was a member of the Women's National Republican Club/ and seems to have fulfilled her obligations/ in a way/ which would lead us to believe/ that she has lived a well/ rounded existence./

The field of literature is a rich one too,/ so we will have to pick at random./ I doubt is any one individual/ has, through her books,/ exerted a much greater influence/ on the average American/ than Dorothy Canfield Fisher./ She was born in Kansas/ in 1879/ studied at Ohio State University/ and Columbia/ and spent much time in Europe,/ besides three years in France during the war./ She has always been deeply interested/ in women and children/ and wherever she has lived/ she has left behind her/ a trail

of widening interests/ amongst her neighbors/ and appreciation/ of even a brief contact/ with a beautiful spirit.

In the field of public affairs,/ two women stand out in Washington today,/ Frances Perkins,/ Secretary/ of Labor/ and first woman to hold a Cabinet post./ Through study and hard work/ she has fitted herself,/ step by step,/ for the position she now holds./ Born in Boston/ in 1882,/ educated at Mt. Holyoke, / University of Pennsylvania/ and Columbia,/ she has held one position/ after another/ in the field of social service/ and then of government./ She has learned to handle people,/ to go carefully/ and yet persistently/ after her ultimate objectives./ She knows/ that a superficial knowledge/ will not get women by,/ and so her thinking is clear /and founded / upon a careful study of facts./ Her work for the government of the State of New York/ gave her technical knowledge/ and experience/ and a familiarity with politics/ and politicians/ which is a valuable background/ in her present responsible position./ She is pioneering for women/ as are all other women/ engaged in political/ or governmental work today. /

Josephine Roche,/ who now holds the position/ of Assistant Secretary of the Treasury/ was born in Nebraska,/ educated at Vassar/ and Columbia/ and entered also the field of social service./ She went from that into business/ and has been President/ of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company/ since 1929,/ making perhaps the most sensational experiment/ in coal mining/ undertaken by any executive./ In the State of Colorado/ unionization was anathema/ and yet she unionized her mines/ and entered into an agreement with her miners which has given them/ more days of work yearly/ and higher wages/ than any other company./ When she found herself faced with a price cutting war,/ her workers/ recognized that the fight was theirs/ as well as hers/ and offered her/ for the time when she needed it,/ half of their wages./

I have chosen these women at random./ There are many more fields/ that I could cover/ and many more women/ who have accomplished as much or more,/ but I only wanted to bring specifically to your attention tonight/ a few instances/ which would show/ that the world is becoming/ as much the woman's home/ as it is the man's./

Judging by the achievements of these women,/ it seems to me/ safe to say/ that the world is progressing/ because of their activities/ and a great many men and women the country over/ can in the words of the psalmist/ "arise and call them blessed".

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Transcribed by Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project staff.

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