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Written Thoughts, WAPA I: Camp Fire Girls and the New Relation of Women to the World

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WRITTEN THOUGHTS

WAPA I

CAMP FIRE GIRLS
AND THE NEW
RELATION OF
WOMEN TO
THE WORLD



CAMP FIRE GIRLS

PRICE TEN CENTS

**Address delivered by Dr. Luther H. Gulick before
the National Education Association,
July, 1912.**

It is my place to sketch the conditions which have created a new relation of women to the world; to show why a nation-wide organization of girls and women is inevitable; and to indicate some of the main results to be secured by such organization.

Most of the grandparents of those in this hall lived in homes which were largely sufficient to themselves. That is, the mothers knitted stockings, wove the cloth for, and made, the clothing, cooked and served the food, churned the butter, made the bedding, did the washing, prepared for and served guests, cared for the sick, had many children, and—died young. In these homes the men tilled the ground, raised the corn and wheat used for daily bread, made most of their own tools, bred their own cattle and horses, raised their own mutton and wool, built their own houses, made the harness, dug the wells, cleared the fields and, on necessity, fought Indians and English.

During the brief winter months the children learned such reading, writing, arithmetic, history and geography as they could, but unless they were destined for law, medicine or theology, their schooling bore but slight relation to their essential preparation for the great business of the world, namely living. The boys and girls working in the house and on the field with their parents, learned those trades and arts and industries which later on were to be their own chief occupation.

Significant as was this learning to do by doing, the indirect results of the work were even more valuable than was that material welfare which was the object of their toil. This most precious indirect effect of daily work consisted in the attainment, toward life and toward the world, of a certain attitude. Gradually it became evident that a chief means to the attainment of comradeship and love was work itself. The boy's moral shoulders, under the stimulus of the increasing load of responsibility which he shared with his father—responsibility for both physical and spiritual necessities of life, grew steadily broader and stronger. This was the preparation for life that produced the men and women who in the main created this country.

The main value of this retrospect is not that we may vainly seek to restore conditions which we have outgrown—not to turn back to that which was adequate only to the simple conditions of civilization a hundred years ago, but to discern, if we may, how we shall preserve the values of this relatively simple mode of life and at the same time welcome the splendor and glory of a new world,—the social world toward which civilization is now blindly struggling.

Present Conditions.

The conditions that our children meet to-day are fundamentally different from the conditions which faced the childhood of our grandparents. Steadily, one after another of the occupations, trades, industries and arts have been taken hold of by the community, organized and placed upon a basis of effectiveness unimagined in the old days of home manufacture. The beauty of our clothes, the comfort

of our dwellings, the variety and quality of our tools, the bewildering world of books, the space-devouring railway, the steel structure business house forty stories high, the great hotel, the bake shops, specialized farms, schools, churches, theatres, clubs, political parties, universities, world news and travel, all proclaim that the humble attainments of the home were but first steps, and that larger and more varied groupings of human beings could attain ends undreamed of in the olden days. It is not, as so many sadly declare, that the home is degenerating. The splendid truth is that infant activities born and raised in the home are now stepping out into the community. This is no more a cause for regret than is the bursting of the shell when hatching time has come, or the spreading of wings when the time for flight has arrived. The world experience given by the great adventure of flight, far surpasses even the beauty, comfort and safety of the nest.

This wonderful new social integration of the world became possible only when man had invented machines and harnessed power. With power and machines he has done most of the things that most of the people of all the world have done during all the ages. He has thus increased the riches of the world more in one generation than had been accumulated before in all time. This, as I have already said, was done mainly by man and not by woman.

The result has been fundamentally to alter the adjustment of woman to the world. In the olden days man, with his weapons, provided food, shelter and safety. Woman made of them the home—she converted passion into love, domesticated beauty, invented industry and was the mother of happiness.

To-day man has again gone out, this time into the social world and with his tools and harnessed world power, has again brought back food, shelter and safety from the primitive dangers. Food from the whole world in a new abundance and a surpassing variety, shelter such as was never dreamed of before, and has doubled the average span of life by lessening its dangers.

Man has made of his new world a wonderful, a magic place in which to work, in which to make physical attainment. He has not made of it, however, a good nor a beautiful place in which to live. He has made of the community a factory, not a home. In other words, he has not done for the community what woman did for the home.

The world-old power and skill and devotion of women are again being called for and again being given, but now not merely to make and preserve the individual home, but to give to the community those spiritual qualities which she gave to the home.

Woman's work has largely been taken into the community and out of the individual home. Woman is, therefore, following her work into the community. She is taking on the same kind of responsibility in the community which she has always carried in the home. Many of the psychic functions of motherhood she is discharging in the school. She is making playgrounds for children, healthier conditions in schools, fairer conditions for the work of men, women and children in farm, store, factory, shop and mine. The ideal is that of universal motherhood—all the women being responsible that every child is loved, cared for and given a fair chance. She is beginning to see that she is responsible

for much of the municipal house-keeping, the conditions in the bake shops and grocery stores. She is concerned that food shall be pure and water clean.

Woman and Social Life.

As woman's deepest service in the home is social, so her deepest responsibility is for the relations between people in the community. It is not enough that evil shall be prevented, that every sort of traffic in human bodies and souls shall cease. Human relationships must so come to be carried on that the deepest desires and hopes and passions shall develop that which is fine—shall lead toward life, not death. The relations between young people must be so arranged that all the passion of love and desire shall lead toward growth and beauty and power, and away from death and disease. To make goodness alluring and show the shallowness and stupidity of vice—to bring the qualities and spirit of the home into the community, to embody such ideals in the common habits of daily life, is an opportunity such as has never before been given to the world. Thus are the age-long qualities of women needed in our new world to realize its surpassing possibilities as well as to save it from spiritual disaster.

We often hear in these days of the conflict between men and women, of the economic competition, but this is, I believe, a lesser and not a larger fact. We are, of course, all human beings and as such most of our qualities and abilities correspond. We all eat and sleep, work and play. But we are significant in the world mainly by the extent to which we, as individuals and as groups, differ from each other. My special place in the world is due to my differences, rather

than to my likenesses to other people. For example, woman is as sure to have the suffrage as the tide is to rise, not because she is as wise, as strong, as skillful as man is, nor because she, like him, is a human being, nor for any other reason of likeness or duplication at all, but because she is different, because the world needs her peculiar and special abilities. It is because she is different, because these differences are fundamental world needs, that it is necessary that she shall bring these differences to the service of the world. This fact, whether woman wants it or no, the suffrage will force inevitably upon her. Woman has been responsible for the home—so she had her voice. Now she has thrust upon her a new, terrible and glorious responsibility and opportunity for the home and social aspects of the community. We insist that she must speak but because she is different and not because she is like. The vote is no end in itself. To serve the community in ways in which she is the creator and specialist is the end, and toward this service the women of the civilized world are pressing, most of them unconsciously—a few of them consciously, but all of them inevitably.

The first and most profound respect in which the new world needs creative service is in the preparation which the community gives to children for the business of living in this new world. Many of us are distressed by the lack of responsibility which so many children show—their failure to understand and yield to the deeper needs of work and its place in life. This deeper moral equipment for life was associated, in the old days, with the faithful performance of the daily work in the home and the deep lessons which were learned by working alongside of the parents.

We have thought, however, that these lessons lay in the specific work done—so we have organized the elements of the work with tools into manual training: we have systematized and organized cooking and sewing into domestic science and domestic art (how prim and strange they do look in their new clothes), and we have put courses in these subjects into our schools. From two to four hours of laboratory work per week has taken the place of from six to twelve hours a day of real work with a real mother doing real work for real people in a real home. The result is that our children know more about the use of tools and the physics and chemistry of cooking and the art of sewing than did our grandmothers. And we are only just beginning to realize that learning how to work has in no respect the character-effect of working, and that being taught is one thing, and working with, is another; and that knowing how, and having responsibility for, are all different in their effects upon life.

Social Function of Work.

About cooking, for example, have grown most of the social feelings and customs of the family. To break bread or to eat salt together is a deeper thing than the knowledge of physics and chemistry involved in the cooking. To know cooking in its social sense—which is its important sense to all of us who are not to be cooks—is to have developed the art of human social intercourse and relationships. It is to make the body feed the soul. The college girl gets her chafing dish not because she is hungry, but to feed her soul with the charm of comradeship.

I am not trying to say that the science of cooking is

unimportant,—but that taken alone it is mechanical. It and the whole family of sciences that can be taught and practised in school do not furnish us with the equivalent in equipment for life that was found in the actual work of the home a century ago. Nor does it in any way equip the child with the newer social feelings that are demanded of the adult in a modern community.

This is a rapid, though I trust not superficial, sketch of the present world affairs as regards women. To meet the new and larger responsibilities it is necessary that she shall

1. Continue to learn team work. Bringing about home conditions of beauty, comfort, health, social happiness and wholesomeness in the community, means the very highest order of mutual loyalty and of team work. This is a new demand upon woman.
2. She must restore the consciousness of dignity, romance and beauty to daily work that it may once more take its place in the training of character.
3. She must bring back and make deep and beautiful these psychic relations which have been injured by the forces that have kept mothers and daughters from working together.
4. And last, and most important and most difficult, the nature of true social relations is to be so revealed by her that adventure, romance and happiness shall be found in the human relationships of life and work, rather than in its sloughs and deserts.

The deepest need of woman is the need of being needed. This is why she responds to the sick or crippled child. If

ever woman was needed, it is to-day. The very riot of our material riches is the peril of our souls. Woman is already taking hold of the present material world, giving to it and bringing into it the love and service and spiritual relations which in the old days created the home and which to-day are changing the man-made work-house into a place adequate to the glorious future life of human beings.

The Camp Fire Girls is an organization which aims to bring the power of organization and the charm of romance again into the humble acts and needs of daily life. It is a deliberate attempt to help meet the new and splendid social world which is before us.

EDUCATION AND THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS.
Connecticut Valley Public Recreation Conference,
Springfield, Mass., April, 1912.

The Boy Scout movement suggested to us the idea of a movement for girls, though the boys' organization was not our model. In the endeavor to find out whether, back of the world's unrest with regard to the status of women, there is a coherent group of facts that could be used as the basis for a constructive program, several things were impressed upon us. These are the points that seem to us clear:

(1) The first is an assumption. We say that all the vocations of men call for certain fundamental elements of character; that no matter whether a boy is going to be a commissioner of education or a teller in a bank or a contractor or a physician or a music teacher, he will need such qualities as courage, resolution and the ability to make up his mind, and to stick to his purpose. And we believe that the same activities that have developed these qualities in man all through the thousands of ages during which man has been getting his character orientation are the means by which the character of man shall be developed. We believe that the games and athletics of boyhood, which, relatively trivial as they are, call for these fundamental racial qualities, are avenues through which power comes that later on may be used in other directions; that the boy who has the grit that will carry him through a running race to the finish is developing the kind of grit that will carry him through business; that the boy who stands loyally by his chum and knows what it is to play for his team and

not one whit for his own glory has in him the stuff of the man who knows how to be loyal to his city and to his cause, remembering not one whit his own glory. In other words, it is accepted as sound pedagogical doctrine that it is part of a boy's training for manhood to engage in some form or other of those activities that have developed manly qualities in mankind.

Now, during all the ages, woman no less than man has had a distinct group of occupations. The activities of the home have been woman's concern—all those activities that center about the fire, the cooking and serving of food and the social ceremonies connected with eating together. Those of us who conceive of eating as a process of nourishing the body are forgetting that it is a social act as well, that through it ties of brotherhood are formed that are sometimes stronger than ties of blood. Woman has been concerned with form and color; with the making of beautiful things, of pottery and of dress; with the decoration of the person; with all that group of personal relationships that relate to the child.

If I have correctly outlined the activities that have been fundamental in the development of womanhood in the race, then I have outlined those activities without which girls will never become womanly women. To expect a girl to become womanly by playing basket ball and hockey is as fatuous as to expect a boy to acquire a self-controlled spine by cooking and sewing, to learn how to say yes or no and to stick to it, by darning stockings or dressing dolls.

I do not want to be misunderstood here. I have no sympathy with those who attempt to divide men and women into two separate categories. Fundamentally we are alike;

we are alike in feeling pride and joy and sorrow, in being affected by success and failure, in needing food and sleep. In all the respects in which we are human we are alike. But there is a smaller group of characteristics in which woman differs from man and man from woman. These differences, such of them as are worth observing, are recognized in the difference between the program for teaching girls and that for teaching boys. They are not the differences in our social natures. They are a part of that precious inheritance of race experience that has come down to us through the ages, an inheritance of beauty expressed in delicate differentiations that are transmitted, not by blood but by precept and personal example.

If, then, girls are to become womanly, if they are to have this set of trained instinct feelings in regard to the domestic side of life, somehow it must be possible for them to pass through the race history of woman, as the boy in his games and athletics passes through the race history of man.

But if we examine the home to-day, we find that all the significant activities have left it. It is no longer a home in the historical sense of the term. Historically, the home is the group of relationships that exist between a man and a woman, and a man and a woman and children who, together, produce the means of living and transmit the inheritance of the ages. But now the home is no longer the center of production and the world relation between parents and children has been broken. My boy cannot come into any consciousness of his work in the world by working with me; my work is too technical. If I were a farmer, he could

ride the horse while I was ploughing and later on he could plough. But there are very few occupations in which this relation between father and son is possible.

It is the same with the girl. Once the girl could begin her apprenticeship by running errands for her mother, and later on could learn from her mother weaving and the making of things of beauty and the expression of herself in social service. But things of beauty are no longer made in our homes. We don't weave at home; clothing is not made in the home. A great deal of the cooking is done elsewhere. Most of the work that is done in the home is drudgery.

Yet if the girl is to have her heritage of womanly instincts she must still get it in the home. The school cannot give it to her. We school men have always looked at the question from the utilitarian point of view. We have assumed that if we could teach the girl to cook and sew better than she could learn at home, we were doing the job. But we find that the important thing is not the work itself, but the social relations involved in the work. Forty girls, in a hollow square with a nurse-clad cook in the middle, learning to cook on little gas stoves, may learn more about cooking and its relations to physics and chemistry than they could learn at home; but what they learn no more gets down into their souls so as to make them fundamentally loving in their attitude toward domestic activities than if they were learning about Arcturus. Learning specific things is not particularly important. The fundamental thing that the girl ought to learn is the kind of cooperation needed in the family; the significance of the act of eating together; the significance of the setting of the table and of the selec-

tion of the food; and the significance of the food from the point of view of the family income.

Learning about work in no way takes the place of doing work. When I remember the little fireplace in my room and tell my small boy that he is not to go to school until he has cleaned out the ashes and brought up the coal, he is learning more than if he were calculating the calories of heat produced by a given amount of coal.

Most of the work of the home is menial and yet girls must learn in the home to love domestic activities. That seemed to us a basic condition with reference to the home.

(2) The next group of points relates to the fact that because the home has always been a thing by itself, that is, a unit, it has never had applied to it those measurements that have created modern science and business. Everything in business that can be measured is measured by the pound, bushel, hour or dollar. But woman has never been compensated and her work has never been measured. There is no such thing as getting it done. She gets up and works as long as she can and then retires. Her work is an endless chaos, as man's was until he began to measure it.

We must find some way to measure woman's work, corresponding to the way in which we are measuring man's work. Somehow it must be standardized, expressed in terms of definite accomplishment, and it must be compensated. It has no status now. A woman may be known because she is a good speaker or a good social worker or the best organizer for woman suffrage, but not because she is a good cook or because she understands the fundamentals of social life as expressed in her own nature. Woman's work

will not assume dignity and importance until it is measured and compensated.

It must be measured, too, so that women may learn to keep step. I know of nothing, unless it be the shape and color of women's hats, that so differentiates them from men as the fact that women don't keep step; men do. By keeping step, I mean cooperative endeavor, the sinking of all those individual differences that are unessential and the emphasizing of all those individual differences that make for power. Man in the history of the race has had to keep step. But woman has been in the home and has not had to. She has had to keep her own house and look after her own children, but other homes have not been her business. She has set her own standards regardless of the standards of other women. But if women are to follow their work out of the home into realms where men have gone, women must learn to keep step. Hundreds of thousands of women are being exploited, are working for less than a living wage, because women have not yet learned to keep step. Keeping step means compelling other people to keep step. Remember, you women are having as hard a time learning to keep step as we men are in learning devotion to the home, and we watch your endeavors with the same amusement with which you watch ours, but we are both making progress along our respective lines.

(3) The last point concerns a condition of modern life that is not peculiar to women. In this age of machinery, most work is routine work and tends to become a deadening grind. Nearly all of us find that our work grows dull and monotonous. We lose our zest and freshness and forget

that these are wonderful days we are living in. We are changing the world more rapidly than it has ever been changed before. Within our own time we have seen the development of the telephone and of the electric trolley car. We can remember when the old horse car strained up State Street hill and the passengers got out to lighten the load for the horse; when there was no wireless; when airships, dreamed of for so many centuries, were still considered wildly impracticable. Our every-day life is full of marvels to stir the imagination. Somehow a way must be found to awaken an appreciation of the adventurous that is going on all around, to bring back color and romance into the world.

In view of the conditions that I have outlined, it seemed to us that there was a demand for an organization for girls corresponding to the Boy Scouts. There is a tremendous attractive power in the idea of belonging to something. When you can wear a membership badge or see letters after your name, or be recognized as belonging to such and such a college or to such and such an order, you straighten your back and swell out and begin to look higher. Our problem was to devise an organization that would not be ostensibly designed to benefit women at all, but would emphasize beauty and make for status. The trouble with most of the movements that have tried to benefit has been that they have been too ostensibly for the purpose of benefiting, and nobody wants to be done good to.

The Camp Fire Girls Organization.

The result of our endeavor is the Camp Fire Girls. We called it the Camp Fire Girls because fire has always

been the center of the home; because "camp fire" suggests out-of-doors, and we want the romantic out-of-door element in it; because the camp represents human solidarity, the coming together of the group.

There are three orders: The Wood Gatherers, the Fire Makers and the Torch Bearers. When a girl first joins she becomes a Wood Gatherer. She stands for these desires: "It is my desire to become a Camp Fire Girl, which is to seek beauty, to give service, to pursue knowledge, to be trustworthy, to hold on to health, to glorify my work and to be happy. This law of the Camp Fire I will strive to follow."

These are the things that she must do before she can attain to the next stage: (1) Help prepare and serve at least two meals for meetings of the Camp Fire; this is to include purchase of food, cooking and serving the meal and care of the fire. Two meals prepared in the home without advice or help may be substituted. (2) Mend a pair of stockings, a knitted undergarment, and hem a dish towel. (3) Keep a written classified account of all money received and spent for at least one month. (4) Tie a square knot five times in succession correctly and without hesitation. (5) Sleep with open windows or out of doors for at least one month. (6) Take an average of at least half an hour daily exercise for not less than a month. (7) Learn the chief causes of infant mortality in summer. Tell how and to what extent it has been reduced in one American community. (8) Refrain from candy and sodas between meals for at least one month. (9) Know what to do in the following emergencies: clothing on fire; person in deep water who cannot swim, both in summer and

through ice in winter; open cut; frosted foot; fainting. (10) Know the principles of elementary bandaging and how to use surgeon's plaster. (11) Know what a girl of her age needs to know about herself. (12) Commit to memory any good poem or song not less than twenty-five lines in length. (13) Know the career of some woman who has done much for the country or state. (14) Know and sing all the words of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." In addition she must present twenty elective honors. There are seven groups of these elective honors—Health Craft, Home Craft, Nature Lore, Camp Craft, Hand Craft, Business and Patriotism. At least one honor must be won in each group, and with the exception of Home Craft, not more than five honors may be presented from any one group. To become a Torch Bearer, the girl must present fifteen more of these elective honors, besides fulfilling certain other requirements.

The activities in these seven groups represent all the phases of woman's work that we know about. They are to make for status in that work. After a certain kind of work has been dignified, it is done in a very different way from what it was before. Also, we have tried to restore the psychic function of motherhood by exalting all the domestic feelings. The work in the business section is designed for the girl who is earning her own living. Credits are given for definite accomplishment in her particular line of work.

The general aim of the Camp Fire Girls is to help girls get ready for the new world in which woman is finding herself and to enable them to overcome the grinding tendency of modern machine work; to show that com-

mon life contains the materials for romance and adventure—that making a soup or inventing a new way of darning may be an adventure; to show, by special names and symbols, the significance of the modest attainments of life; to put woman's work into measurable bundles; to develop in girls the power of keeping step. We have made the organization so simple that it can be carried on by ordinary people. It is adapted to all peoples.

Woman's work has left the home—the religious institutions have gone, the educational institutions have gone, the weaving and the making of things of beauty have gone, yet the things which these stood for should occupy all her powers the bulk of her days most of the years of all her life. There must be a broader field of usefulness for her. The fundamental difference between the world relation of women and the world relation of men is that woman's instinct feelings have been confined to the home while man's have worked themselves out in the wider life of the community; as the gang instinct, for example, works itself out in the relation of the man to the party or to the army. Here is woman's opportunity, not to copy the institutions of men, but to apply her own instinct feelings to community life. Many of the fundamental activities of the community are not primarily the business of men—those that relate to good house-keeping, for instance, to the cleaning up and particularly to the beautifying of our cities. And so the conditions under which girls work in New York City are the business of the women of New York City, although the men must help them out. Woman's work is still woman's work. The only difference is that while formerly it was essentially individualistic, it can now be done socially with other women.

Love has been predominantly a home affair. By applying it to the community, we are going to get a finer type of community life. It is coming all over the world, but it must be organized and brought about by women and it will take time. The readjustment of one-half of human kind to the world is a tremendous step.

