

LADIES, —

It is with diffidence that I arise to address you this evening, being unaccustomed to public speaking, and inability to do justice to the subject will not allow me to make such an impression, or do so much good as I could wish. I should have been glad if this duty had been given to abler hands; but as your committee solicited me to address you, I shall offer a few remarks, and trust you shall make every allowance for my inexperience.

We are aware, in the first place, that every individual has some influence upon those with whom he associates, and there is no power so widely diffused, or of which we are so little able to calculate the final result, as that of influence. I believe it is admitted on all hands, that female influence is paramount to all other; and that their influence over almost any subject is sufficient to turn the scale in favor of that side on which they enlist.— How many instances are there in history, where the character and opinions of a nation have been greatly affected by female influence.

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To prove this fact we have the case of Elizabeth Heyrick. This lady was the first individual who brought forward immediate emancipation in Great Britain. She wrote a book to show the enormities of Slavery, and prove that it ought to be

abolished immediately and unconditionally. Her arguments were so clear, vigorous, and forcible, that Wilberforce and his contemporaries were convinced that the principles were those of truth and equity, and they declared war against that abominable system which had so long disgraced christendom, unfurled the banner of immediate emancipation, and never ceased the warfare until they gained the victory: a victory that exalted the character of their country, disenthralled nearly a million of unfortunate victims, and erected to their immortal names, monuments more lasting than the Pyramids of Egypt.

What may we not expect, Ladies, if the influence of one humble female revolutionized the opinions of a nation, and that nation the most powerful, intelligent and refined on the face of the globe? — What may we not expect, if your influence are combined, and you are zealous in the cause of benevolence? Benevolence is a field peculiarly adapted to your character and feelings, and it is indeed cheering to see the spirit and energy with which you have entered upon this field of usefulness. One of the peculiar features of the present age, is the lofty, dignified, and responsible stations which females occupy in society. It is female influence

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that polishes the manners and elevates the mind of man. She is the ornament of his life, the kind protectress of his peace and comfort, and her heart is the home of his affection and love. Well may it be said, there is no place under the broad canopy of heaven, no condition, situation, or circumstances, into which female influence may not enter, either for good or for evil, a blessing or a curse. And every day's experience convinces us that their influence upon the character and happiness of man is very great. It is to woman that we are indebted for the formation of characters: she is with us through life, nourishes us through sickness, soothes us in distress, and sustains us in adversity.

2d. Charity, or benevolence, in its general acceptation, means to do good, and it also implies love. It is one of the noblest virtues, because it is distributive, and looks abroad from self, and embraces the whole human family, without regard to condition or circumstances. If Paul, in speaking of this virtue, as if to say it was the basis, the key-stone of the Christian religion, exclaims, "though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." And this apostle urged in the most empathic

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and soul-stirring language, the *duty* of Christians to be charitable. And so far as my knowledge of the scriptures extends, there seems to be more precepts, greater efficacy, and higher promises set upon charity than there is upon almost any other virtue. We find it ranked with righteousness, and according to the sacred text, made almost equivalent to it. In view of these facts, I am often amazed at the apathy of Christians to this sacred duty, and the conduct of many is truly inexplicable. For instance I have known Christians refuse to bestow alms upon those of a different complexion or country, and give, as a reason, that those individuals had brought poverty and ruin upon themselves, by their vices: but if they were actuated by the spirit of a certain heathen philosopher of antiquity, who, when censured for bestowing alms upon a worthless fellow, replied, that he gave not to the *manners*, but to the *man*—they certainly would not act so inconsistently.

Besides, the scriptures declared the reward of charity is not so much to those who receive as to those who give. It is the duty of a good steward to provide for the members of the family, and the poor and destitute being a part of God's family, Christians discharge not their duty, un-

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less these are provided for. And I sometimes have thought, that this duty was more strictly enjoined upon the American people than any other nation under heaven, because of the nature of their institutions, and because of their loud pretensions to christianity.

Charity is a meek and blessed influence, stealing, as it were, unawares upon the heart: It does not excite and rouse up the passions, and it is untrammelled by religious creeds. It strengthens and invigorates our characters, and glows with the spirit of love. It is spread out like a legible language upon the broad face of nature, and it uplifts the spirit within us, and enables us to overlook the frailties and weaknesses of human nature. — Let us be diligent, my friends, in cultivating this virtue. It tends to awaken and bring out the finer feelings of our nature, and it naturally leads us to follow the rule, to “do unto others as you wish others to do unto you;” and to “love our neighbours as ourselves.” If we were actuated by these glorious principles, poverty and degradation in all their multiplied forms would soon be removed, and we should stand forth “redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled.”

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in comfortable circumstances, but by a series of misfortunes, was reduced to poverty. Had it not been for the Dorcas Society, of which she was a member, she would have been thrown upon the tender mercies of the world, or have suffered for the necessaries of life. But they, like the good Samaritan, snatched her from the jaws of death, poured balm into her wounds, and consolation into her heart. Here we have, ladies, a striking instance of the efficacy of a union of feeling and action. No one individual, nor probably two or three, could have maintained that lady without inconvenience, but by the union of many it was done without any great tax upon the members, either of time or money.

As we are at best but poor, dependent creatures, it matters not how wealthy or exalted our situation, still we are dependent creatures, and liable to the same misfortunes as others; consequently, it is our duty, aside from feelings of sympathy and benevolence, it is our duty, as members of the human family, and members of the community in which we live, to assist the poor and destitute, not knowing how soon we may stand in need of assistance ourselves. And at this inclement season, when fuel, provisions, and the necessaries of life are high, and little or

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no demand for labor, we should be careful to remember the poor. Many of us are not aware of the amount of suffering there is among our people. One of the ladies of this society informed me that she called a short time since upon a family, and found them sick, and in want of the necessaries of life. Now, my friends, this Society aims to relieve all such destitute persons, and I hope, gentlemen, you will aid them in their noble and philanthropic effort. Let the collection to-night convince them we [a]re pleased with their spirit and zeal in this good cause, and that we will stand by, encourage and assist them in their labor of love.

Persevere, then, ladies, and be diligent in the cause of benevolence, and by administering to the wants of the poor and destitute, you will, at the same time, administer peace, joy, and consolation to your hearts, and you will be enabled to exclaim, in the language of one of old—  
“When the ear heard me then it blessed me, because I relieved the poor and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I made the widow’s heart to sing for joy, and my judgment was a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to

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the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause I knew not I searched out."

Finally, ladies, let me congratulate you upon the rapid increase of your members, and the flourishing state of your treasury, and the good spirit of your private and public deliberations, and the correct and judicious manner in which your business operations have been conducted. Your principles are noble and philanthropic, and while you continue in the same straight forward course, I am sure you cannot be viewed with indifference. On the contrary, your precept and example will tend to excite the zeal of kindred associations, and you will be stimulated to renewed exertion. And to every lady who is not a member of this Society, I would respectfully say, do not delay to join. Now is the time, come forward to-night and add your name, your means and your influence to that of our beloved sisters, in extending assistance to every needy individual in our country.

Doubtless I have trespassed long enough upon your time and patience, but I wish to make a few remarks upon another topic, and shall address myself to the young men.

I believe the time has come, when it is the duty of every individual, it matters not whether they have one talent or five,

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I believe the time has come, when it is the duty of every individual, it matters not whether they have one talent or five,



to use it to the best of his ability in forwarding and sustaining the interest of the whole. It is strange, in a city like ours, when so large a population, blessed with the same privileges, and having so much talent and enterprize as we have, it is indeed strange that so little is done to sustain societies for the moral and intellectual improvement. There must, young men, there *must* be a rousing up to action if we expect to keep peace with the times. The ladies have set us a noble example, and I trust their influence will serve to banish the spirit of discord which weakens and paralyzes our efforts, and which will break down every society we may attempt to establish. I presume there are but a few individuals within the bounds of the city, but what would be glad if the colored people were elevated in morals and literature. But if we are content to wait without exertion for such a state of things, we shall, most assuredly die without the sight. "Help thyself," is a trite, but nevertheless a true maxim, and one which should constantly ring in our ears; and, if felt, our responsibilities, instead of waisting our time and money in frivolous amusements, we should gird on the armor of moral improvement, and take hold of the work with spirit and energy. A united effort, with such views, would

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have a powerful tendency to improve our moral, intellectual and political situation.

The times call for action; we see all classes, conditions, and denominations, actively engaged in improving their moral and intellectual conditions, and shall it be said that the colored people alone are inactive? No, young men, let not this charge be brought against us; but let us be diligent, unite our efforts, and we shall eventually ascend the rugged steep to the temple of knowledge and respectability. The public eye is now upon us, and the current of public sympathy is changing in our favor: witness, for instance, the establishment of public schools for our instruction, and the expression of feeling at the anti-slavery meetings; and they have bound themselves, by a clause in their constitution, to help us out of the slough of ignorance, degradation, and prejudice; and in view of these things it behooves us to be up and doing to strengthen the hands and the hearts of our friends, that they may not grow weary in the good cause.

And again, one of the good efforts resulting from frequent intercourse in useful societies, is—we learn the characters and opinions of each other, and it begets reverence and esteem, and naturally leads to union of sentiment and action; and

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union, like faith, will remove mountains. I learned, a short time since, through the columns of the public press, that the coloured people of Philadelphia, besides paying a poor tax of \$2,500, annually, expend no less than \$9,000 in supporting their destitute. And that they had in operation no less than sixty beneficent societies, numbering several hundred members; and to their immortal honor be it said, not one of them have ever been convicted in a court of justice. — These are striking facts, and convincing proofs, to my mind, of the power and utility of frequent meeting in useful societies. And I believe we have as good materials in the city of Buffalo for the formation of benificent societies, as Philadelphia, or any other city in the Union. And it only wants the right spirit and concentrated action to establish our characters, and exert a widely extended influence. We find the colored people of Philadelphia, by uniting their talents, their means, and their influences, have greatly improved their moral and intellectual condition, within the last fiver or six years; and if we take the same judicious and manly course, we shall most assuredly enjoy the same glorious results.

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