

A Woman's Place in Science

By Amelia Earhart

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"This modern world of science and invention is a particular interest to women, for the lives of women have been more affected by its new horizons than those of any other group. Profound and stirring as have been accomplishments in the remoter fields of pure research, it is in the home that the applications of scientific achievement have perhaps been most far-reaching, and it is through changing conditions there that women have become the greatest beneficiaries in the modern scheme.

Science has released them from much of the age-old drudgery connected with the process of living. Candle dipping, weaving and crude methods of manufacturing necessities are things of the past for an increasing majority. Today, light, heat and power may be obtained by pushing buttons and cunningly manufactured and appealing products of all the world are available at the housewife's door. Indeed, beyond that door she need not go, thanks to the miracles of modern communication and transportation.

Not only has applied science decreased the toil in the home, but it has provided undreamed of economic opportunities for women. Today, millions of them are earning their living under conditions made possible only through a basically altered industrial system. Probably no scientific development is more startling than the effect of this new and growing economic independence upon women themselves. When the history of our times is written, it must record as supremely significant the physical, psychic and social changes women have undergone in these exciting decades.

The impetus of the sociological evolution of the last half century should be largely credited to those who have toiled in laboratories, and those who have translated into practical use the fruits of such labors. One hears a lament that a mechanized world would not be a pleasant one in which to live. Quite the contrary should be true. And it can be true if the fine minds who have

accomplished so much in the realms of applied science will unite with the same enthusiasm to control their creations against social misuse.

Obviously, research regarding technological unemployment is as vital today as further refinement or production of labor saving and comfort giving devices. Among all the marvels of modern invention, that with which I am most concerned, is of course, air transportation. Flying is perhaps the most dramatic of recent scientific attainment. In the brief span of thirty-odd years, the world has seen an inventor's dream, first materialized by the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk, become an everyday actuality. Perhaps I'm prejudiced, but to me it seems that no other phase of modern progress contrives to maintain such a brimming measure of romance and beauty, coupled with utility as does aviation.

Within itself, this industry embraces many of those scientific accomplishments which yesterday seemed fantastic impossibilities. The pilot when he is way above the earth at 200 miles an hour talks by radio telephone to ground stations or to other planes in the air. In thick weather he is guided by radio beam and receives detailed reports of conditions ahead gleaned through special instruments and new methods of meteorological calculations. He sits behind engines, the reliability of which measured by yardsticks of the past is all but unbelievable.

I myself still fly a WASP motor which has carried me over the North Atlantic, part of the Pacific, to and from Mexico City and many times across this continent. Aviation, this young modern giant, exemplifies the possible relationship of women and the creations of science. Although women as yet have not taken full advantage of its use and benefits, air travel is available to them as to men. As so often happens in introducing the new or changing the old, public acceptance depends peculiarly upon women's friendly attitude.

In aviation, they are arbiters of whether or not their families shall fly, and as such, are a potent influence. And lastly, there is a place within the industry itself, for women who work. While still greatly outnumbered, they are finding more and more opportunities for employment in the ranks of this latest transportation medium. May I hope this movement will spread throughout all branches of applied science and industry and that women may come to share with men the joy of doing. Those can appreciate rewards most who have helped create."