

JANE ADDAMS
FORTY YEARS AT
HULL-HOUSE

BEING "TWENTY YEARS AT HULL-
HOUSE" AND "THE SECOND TWENTY
YEARS AT HULL-HOUSE"

IN ONE VOLUME

With an Afterword by

LILLIAN D. WALD

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PREFACE

EVERY preface is, I imagine, written after the book has been completed, and now that I have finished this volume I will state several difficulties which may put the reader upon his guard unless he too postpones the preface to the very last.

Many times during the writing of these reminiscences, I have become convinced that the task was undertaken all too soon. One's fiftieth year is indeed an impressive milestone at which one may well pause to take an accounting, but the people with whom I have so long journeyed have become so intimate a part of my lot that they cannot be written of either in praise or blame; the public movements and causes with which I am still identified have become so endeared, some of them through their very struggles and failures, that it is difficult to discuss them.

It has also been hard to determine what incidents and experiences should be selected for recital, and I have found that I might give an accurate report of each isolated event and yet give a totally misleading impression of the whole, solely by the selection of the incidents. For these reasons

and many others I have found it difficult to make a faithful record of the years since the autumn of 1889 when without any preconceived social theories or economic views, I came to live in an industrial district of Chicago.

If the reader should inquire why the book was ever undertaken in the face of so many difficulties, in reply I could instance two purposes, only one of which in the language of organized charity, is "worthy." Because Settlements have multiplied so easily in the United States I hoped that a simple statement of an earlier effort, including the stress and storm, might be of value in their interpretation and possibly clear them of a certain charge of superficiality. The unworthy motive was a desire to start a "backfire," as it were, to extinguish two biographies of myself, one of which had been submitted to me in outline, that made life in a Settlement all too smooth and charming.

The earlier chapters present influences and personal motives with a detail which will be quite unpardonable if they fail to make clear the personality upon whom various social and industrial movements in Chicago reacted during a period of twenty years. No effort is made in the recital to separate my own history from that of Hull-House during the years when I was "launched deep into the stormy intercourse of human life" for, so far as a mind is pliant under the pressure of events and experiences, it becomes hard to detach it.

It has unfortunately been necessary to abandon the chronological order in favor of the topical, for during the early years at Hull-House, time seemed to afford a mere framework for certain lines of activity and I have found in writing this book, that after these activities have been recorded, I can scarcely recall the scaffolding.

More than a third of the material in the book has appeared in *The American Magazine*, one chapter of it in *McClure's Magazine*, and earlier statements of the Settlement motive, published years ago, have been utilized in chronological order because it seemed impossible to reproduce their enthusiasm.

It is a matter of gratification to me that the book is illustrated from drawings made by Miss Norah Hamilton of Hull-House. I am indebted for the making of the index and for many other services to Miss Clara Landsberg, also of Hull-House.

If the conclusions of the whole matter are similar to those I have already published at intervals during the twenty years at Hull-House, I can only make the defense that each of the earlier books was an attempt to set forth a thesis supported by experience, whereas this volume endeavors to trace the experiences through which various conclusions were forced upon me.

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TWENTY YEARS AT HULL-HOUSE

CHAPTER I

EARLIEST IMPRESSIONS

ON the theory that our genuine impulses may be connected with our childish experiences, that one's bent may be tracked back to that "No-Man's Land" where character is formless but nevertheless settling into definite lines of future development, I begin this record with some impressions of my childhood.

All of these are directly connected with my father, although of course I recall many experiences apart from him. I was one of the younger members of a large family and an eager participant in the village life, but because my father was so distinctly the dominant influence and because it is quite impossible to set forth all of one's early impressions, it has seemed simpler to string these first memories on that single cord. Moreover, it was this cord which not only held fast my supreme affection, but also first drew me into the moral concerns of life, and later afforded a clew there to

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which I somewhat wistfully clung in the intricacy of its mazes.

It must have been from a very early period that I recall "horrid nights" when I tossed about in my bed because I had told a lie. I was held in the grip of a miserable dread of death, a double fear, first, that I myself should die in my sins and go straight to that fiery Hell which was never mentioned at home, but which I had heard all about from other children, and, second, that my father — representing the entire adult world which I had basely deceived — should himself die before I had time to tell him. My only method of obtaining relief was to go downstairs to my father's room and make full confession. The high resolve to do this would push me out of bed and carry me down the stairs without a touch of fear. But at the foot of the stairs I would be faced by the awful necessity of passing the front door — which my father, because of his Quaker tendencies, did not lock — and of crossing the wide and black expanse of the living room in order to reach his door. I would invariably cling to the newel post while I contemplated the perils of the situation, complicated by the fact that the literal first step meant putting my bare foot upon a piece of oilcloth in front of the door, only a few inches wide, but lying straight in my path. I would finally reach my father's bedside perfectly breathless and, having panted out the history of my sin, invariably re-

ceived the same assurance that if he "had a little girl who told lies," he was very glad that she "felt too bad to go to sleep afterwards." No absolution was asked for nor received, but apparently the sense that the knowledge of my wickedness was shared, or an obscure understanding of the affection which underlay the grave statement, was sufficient, for I always went back to bed as bold as a lion, and slept, if not the sleep of the just, at least that of the comforted.

I recall an incident which must have occurred before I was seven years old, for the mill in which my father transacted his business that day was closed in 1867. The mill stood in the neighboring town adjacent to its poorest quarter. Before then I had always seen the little city of ten thousand people with the admiring eyes of a country child, and it had never occurred to me that all its streets were not as bewilderingly attractive as the one which contained the glittering toyshop and the confectioner. On that day I had my first sight of the poverty which implies squalor, and felt the curious distinction between the ruddy poverty of the country and that which even a small city presents in its shabbiest streets. I remember launching at my father the pertinent inquiry why people lived in such horrid little houses so close together, and that after receiving his explanation I declared with much firmness when I grew up I should, of course, have a large house,



HOMESTEAD AT CEDARVILLE.

but it would not be built among the other large houses, but right in the midst of horrid little houses like these.

That curious sense of responsibility for carrying on the world's affairs which little children often exhibit because "the old man clogs our earliest years," I remember in myself in a very absurd manifestation. I dreamed night after night that every one in the world was dead excepting myself, and that upon me rested the responsibility of making a wagon wheel. The village street remained as usual, the village blacksmith shop was "all there," even a glowing fire upon the forge and the anvil in its customary place near the door, but no human being was within sight. They had all gone around the edge of the hill to the village cemetery, and I alone remained alive in the deserted world. I always stood in the same spot in the blacksmith shop, darkly pondering as to how to begin, and never once did I know how, although I fully realized that the affairs of the world could not be resumed until at least one wheel should be made and something started. Every victim of nightmare is, I imagine, overwhelmed by an excessive sense of responsibility and the consciousness of a fearful handicap in the effort to perform what is required; but perhaps never were the odds more heavily against "a warder of the world" than in these reiterated dreams of mine, doubtless compounded in equal parts of a childish version of

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Robinson Crusoe and of the end-of-the-world predictions of the Second Adventists, a few of whom were found in the village. The next morning would often find me, a delicate little girl of six, with the further disability of a curved spine, standing in the doorway of the village blacksmith shop, anxiously watching the burly, red-shirted figure at work. I would store my mind with such details of the process of making wheels as I could observe, and sometimes I plucked up courage to ask for more. "Do you always have to sizzle the iron in water?" I would ask, thinking how horrid it would be to do. "Sure!" the good-natured blacksmith would reply, "that makes the iron hard." I would sigh heavily and walk away, bearing my responsibility as best I could, and this of course I confided to no one, for there is something too mysterious in the burden of "the winds that come from the fields of sleep" to be communicated, although it is at the same time too heavy a burden to be borne alone.

My great veneration and pride in my father manifested itself in curious ways. On several Sundays, doubtless occurring in two or three different years, the Union Sunday School of the village was visited by strangers, some of those "strange people" who live outside a child's realm, yet constantly thrill it by their close approach. My father taught the large Bible class in the left-hand corner of the church next to the pulpit, and to my eyes at least, was a most imposing figure in

his Sunday frock coat, his fine head rising high above all the others. I imagined that the strangers were filled with admiration for this dignified person, and I prayed with all my heart that the ugly, pigeon-toed little girl, whose crooked back obliged her to walk with her head held very much upon one side, would never be pointed out to these visitors as the daughter of this fine man. In order to lessen the possibility of a connection being made, on these particular Sundays I did not walk beside my father, although this walk was the



great event of the week, but attached myself firmly to the side of my Uncle James Addams, in the hope that I should be mistaken for his child, or at least that I should not remain so conspicuously unattached that troublesome questions might identify an Ugly Duckling with her imposing parent. My uncle, who had many children of his own, must

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have been mildly surprised at this unwonted attention, but he would look down kindly at me, and say, "So you are going to walk with me to-day?" "Yes, please, Uncle James," would be my meek reply. He fortunately never explored my motives, nor do I remember that my father ever did, so that in all probability my machinations have been safe from public knowledge until this hour.

It is hard to account for the manifestations of a child's adoring affection, so emotional, so irrational, so tangled with the affairs of the imagination. I simply could not endure the thought that "strange people" should know that my handsome father owned this homely little girl. But even in my chivalric desire to protect him from his fate, I was not quite easy in the sacrifice of my uncle, although I quieted my scruples with the reflection that the contrast was less marked and that, anyway, his own little girl "was not so very pretty." I do not know that I commonly dwelt much upon my personal appearance, save as it thrust itself as an incongruity into my father's life, and in spite of unending evidence to the contrary, there were even black moments when I allowed myself to speculate as to whether he might not share the feeling. Happily, however, this specter was laid before it had time to grow into a morbid familiar by a very trifling incident. One day I met my father coming out of his bank on the main street of the neighboring city which seemed to me a

veritable whirlpool of society and commerce. With a playful touch of exaggeration, he lifted his high and shining silk hat and made me an imposing bow. This distinguished public recognition, this totally unnecessary identification among a mass of "strange people" who couldn't possibly know unless he himself made the sign, suddenly filled me with a sense of the absurdity of the entire feeling. It may not even then have seemed as absurd as it really was, but at least it seemed enough so to collapse or to pass into the limbo of forgotten specters.

I made still other almost equally grotesque attempts to express this doglike affection. The house at the end of the village in which I was born, and which was my home until I moved to Hull-House, in my earliest childhood had opposite to it — only across the road and then across a little stretch of greensward — two mills belonging to my father; one flour mill, to which the various grains were brought by the neighboring farmers, and one sawmill, in which the logs of the native timber were sawed into lumber. The latter offered the great excitement of sitting on a log while it slowly approached the buzzing saw which was cutting it into slabs, and of getting off just in time to escape a sudden and gory death. But the flouring mill was much more beloved. It was full of dusky, floury places which we adored, of empty bins in which we might play house; it had a basement,