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MODERN  
INDUSTRY IN  
RELATION TO  
THE FAMILY,  
HEALTH,  
EDUCATION,  
MORALITY

FLORENCE KELLEY



CAMBRIDGE

# Modern Industry in Relation to the Family, Health, Education, Morality

FLORENCE KELLEY



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### **Modern Industry in Relation to the Family, Health, Education, Morality**

Florence Kelley (1859–1932) was a committed socialist and political reformer who campaigned against child labour in the United States. In 1899 she became the leader of the National Consumers' League, an anti-sweatshop and pro-minimum wage pressure group which she supported until her death. This volume, first published in 1914, describes her views on the problems facing American society due to the expansion of industry. Kelley discusses the negative effects of rapid industrialisation on the American urban working class, in terms of the effects on the family, on the health of workers, on the education of the working class; and discusses the economic 'morality' of controlling the means of production. She also suggests possible legislation to mitigate these problems, some of which later passed into federal law. This volume provides a vivid description of the lives of America's urban working class and illustrates the extent of contemporary industrialisation in America.

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EDUCATION, MORALITY

BY

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## NOTE

This volume contains the substance—amplified to accord with the unprecedently rapid progress of legislation—of four lectures given in 1913 at Teachers' College, Columbia University. They formed the opening course of lectures delivered annually under the Isabel Hampton Robb Foundation, established by the National League of Nursing Education.

# **I**

## **MODERN INDUSTRY IN RELATION TO THE FAMILY**



## MODERN INDUSTRY AND THE FAMILY

MODERN industry affords, in more generous measure than the human race has before known them, all those goods which form the material basis of family life—food, clothing, shelter, and the materials and opportunities for subsistence for husband, wife and children.

But modern industry tends to disintegrate the family, so threatens it that the civilized nations are, and for at least one generation have been, actively building a code intended to save the family from this destructive pressure.

This is the paradox of Modern Industry.

It is my object to illustrate this paradox by indicating some forms of the pressure of industry upon the family, and upon each of its elements.

The American ideal of the home—inherited from the time when we were an agricultural country—includes father, mother and children living together in a house; the father the breadwinner, the mother the homemaker, the children at play and at school until they reach a reasonable age for

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work—the boys helping their fathers with the chores, and the girls learning under their mothers' eyes the arts of the housewife, the house which shelters this group being the property of the family or in process of becoming their property. Originally, the typical home was a farm which furnished subsistence, and the children received within the family group industrial, religious and moral training. Our departure from this early ideal under the pressure of modern industry is conspicuous.

The paradoxical tendency of the family to disintegrate under pressure of the same industry which affords it infinite material enrichment offers the key to a complex, varied legislative movement going forward in all the civilized nations. Seemingly incoherent, this movement is a ramified effort to safeguard the family. The mind is wearied even by a partial enumeration of the elements of the industrial and political code upon which the modern world is at work to this end.\*

\* Among those elements the following are important:

- a. Compulsory arbitration of labor disputes;
- b. Workmen's compensation and social insurance, factory inspection and compulsory provision of fire precautions and safety devices;
- c. Regulation of working time, including one day's rest in seven, a short working day, prohibition of night work for

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Such effort to bulwark the family by comprehensive legislation arises because, all over the modern world, a large and increasing proportion of husbands and fathers are by the nature of their work taken out of their homes, or killed outright, or maimed, or they are disabled by industrial diseases, and thus disqualified for their normal duty of breadwinner.

Or throughout long periods of seasonal unemployment they are recurrently without earnings. Even when in health and at work, unskilled laborers and many employees of higher grade are so far underpaid that they cannot maintain their wives and children, who are, therefore, drawn out of the home into industry to supplement the earnings of the father; or the home is invaded under the sweating system by the materials of industry.

women and children, and the utmost attainable restriction of night work for men;

d. Prohibition of child labor and of homework under the sweating system;

e. Minimum wage boards and widows' pensions with generous provision for institutional care of certain classes of diseased and defective children;

f. Compulsory education prolonged for part time instruction throughout minority;

g. Housing codes;

h. Pure food laws;

i. The enfranchisement of women.

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### Tendency to Celibacy

Vast numbers of men never found families at all, because they fear to marry upon insufficient wages insecurely held by reason of the precarious nature of many employments; or because their health is destroyed before they reach an economic position which seems to them to justify marriage; or because the girls whom they would gladly marry are worn out and broken down in the service of industry.

Abjuring family life is a social loss from every point of view, most of all when the men who thus deny themselves are of a high type and animated by unselfishness. Citizens of Cincinnati are erecting a memorial to such a man, Joe Haeberle, once head of the truck drivers' union of that city. This self-taught German immigrant worked himself literally to death in the service of the children of Ohio. Having obtained some drinking fountains for the teamsters' horses, he discovered that the children made them centres of their play during school hours. Thus he learned that great numbers of children were out of school because Cincinnati had not, at that time, free school books. For many years he carried on the agitation for free books, for effective compulsory education and, at the last, for workable child labor laws. Ham-

pered by his foreign accent, his uncouth, ill-fitting clothes, and his uncertain teamster's gait, Joe Haeberle spent every free evening, every holiday, every Sunday struggling against indifference, and prejudice, and active, open hostility, to get for the children of Ohio the best that any state gives its children. A few months before his too early death, he told one of his friends that he had never been willing to ask a woman to share with him the hardships of life on the only earnings he could hope for, ten dollars a week. Faithful to his ideal of the society of the future in which all children should have the opportunity of education, unselfish in his life and his death, this tender, devoted servant of the children lived and died wifeless and childless.

Compulsory celibacy is the lot of vast numbers of men employed upon reclamation schemes, building railways, tunnels and water power constructions. Sometimes the work lies far from civilization, but oftener—as in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York—the inhumane arrangements of the construction companies and contractors make family life impossible for men who do this work. Worn-out freight cars and vermin-ridden bunk houses are not fit homes for wives and children. But these are the dwellings afforded for rapidly increasing thousands of work-



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ing men, for years at a time, a group being moved from one section to another of some great undertaking, the quality of their quarters varying little.

Of all the occupations which detach men from home life the oldest is that of the sailors. In Phœnicia, in the Greece of Homer, their craft was already an ancient one. In our ports as then the sailors are proverbially homeless, and their numbers grow as the industry of Europe, particularly that of Germany and England, lives increasingly by manufacturing and distributing throughout the world raw materials from the Tropics, these nations importing meanwhile in ever larger proportion their own food supplies.\*

New and characteristic of modern industry is the myriad of men who float about on land, their family life reduced to a minimum by the nature of their occupations, among whom are commercial travellers, kept perforce away from their families a large part of every year. Sleeping car conductors and porters, and dining car waiters, leaving New York to go to Chicago, may there find orders to go on to Seattle or San Diego, and do not know when they will again reach home. In general, family life in the home is obviously minimized for all those husbands and fathers whose

\* The phenomenal development of the cocoa and chocolate industry and of rubber production are cases in point.